

THE EXODUS

Luke 9:28-36

Jimmy Carter passed away in January as the oldest president in history—100 years. Carter seemed to come out of nowhere in 1976 to win the election. In 1980 he lost by a big margin to Reagan. But Carter through his efforts as a champion for Habitat for Humanity and other charitable causes, including the initiative that led to the near eradication of Guinea Worm infection, became known as one of best ex-presidents. He died peacefully at his home, honored by many. He seemed to go out the right way.

We can contrast him to FDR who ran in 1944 only because we were still in World War 2. With his poor health Roosevelt may have been overwhelmed by Stalin at Yalta and died in 1945, leaving Harry Truman ill-prepared for taking over. We could also look at his cousin Teddy Roosevelt who made the mistake of saying in 1904 that he would not run for reelection in 1908, something he regretted the rest of his life. He became a frustrated politician who did not go out in style.

We see that in sports. Aaron Rodgers had been a disaster for the Jets when he could have retired at a much higher point. Bill Belichick could have retired from the Patriots when Tom Brady left and be seen as the greatest coach in NFL history. Instead, the Patriots had mediocre seasons after Brady left, Belichick got divorced and married a young girl, and people wonder how he can coach in the college ranks where recruiting is everything. In contrast Ted Williams last at bat was a home run. John Elway retired with a Superbowl win. There was a funny commercial showing Bret Favre at a restaurant and a waitress asking him, “Do you want another piece of pie?” His answer is, “No, a man has to know his limits.”

How do we want to go out?

Our worship this morning focuses on Jesus’ Transfiguration. Luke Gospel tells us about this event, “Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.” The word “departure” is literally “exodus,” the same word used to describe how Moses and people of Israel left Egypt. We remember how God parted the waters of the Red Sea so the people of Israel could cross over on dry ground. Then when the Egyptian army went after them, the waters came back and drowned them. Now that is “going out” in style! We read later in the book of Joshua that as spies are sent into the city of Jericho they are hidden by a local woman, Rahab, who said she took that risk because she and her people had heard what God had done to the Egyptians. Later that same Moses was not allowed to enter into the promised land, but he was buried personally by God. Our Old Testament says about him:

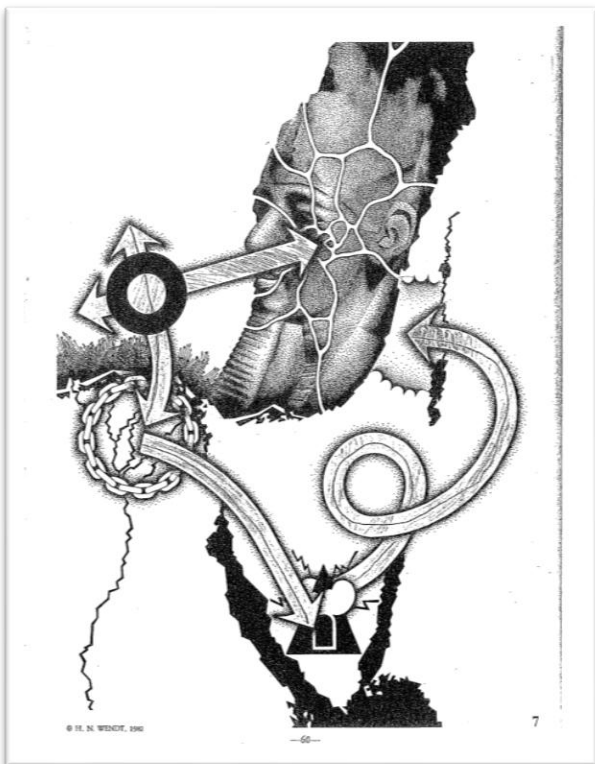
There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Elijah also seemed to go out the right way. Only he and Enoch are mentioned as the people in the Bible who did not die, but went straight to God. In Elijah's case it was by a chariot of fire. Now that's the way to go out!

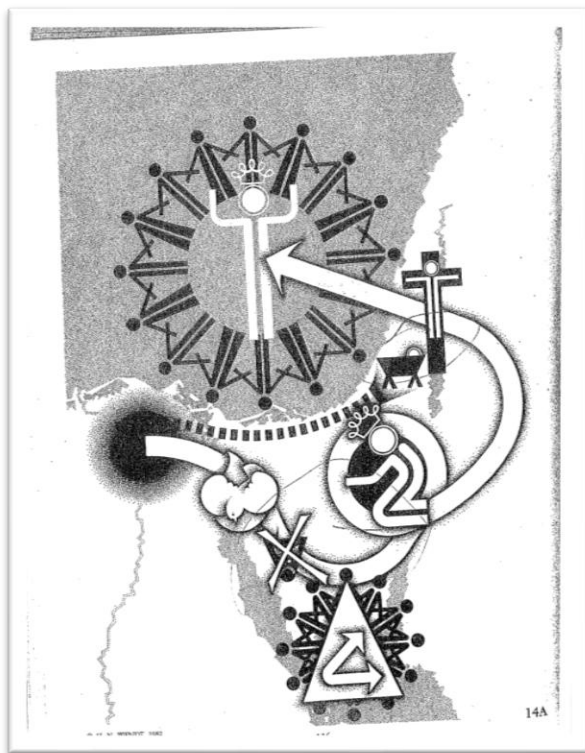
But for the rest of us death waits. Jimmy Carter may have done much as an ex-president, but his last days were spent lying helpless in a bed. No matter how dignified a death may be, it is still death.

But Moses and Elijah were not talking about their end, but the one that Jesus would take. Jesus didn't go out in style. He didn't lie in state at the Capitol Rotunda. He didn't have a special day at the stadium where he could make a speech like Lou Gehrig to say he was the "Luckiest man in the world," He didn't hold an academy award or a NCAA trophy or his grandchild in His hands. The "Exodus" Jesus faced was to the cross. Jesus didn't go blindly on that journey. No, He knew from prophecies of the Old Testament that God's chosen, the Messiah, would have to bear the sins of the world.

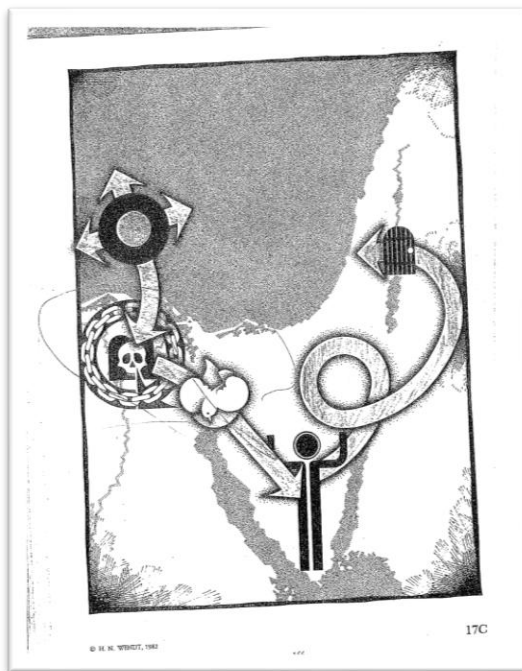
Look at this picture:



We see here a picture describing the Exodus Moses and the people of Israel took out of Egypt. They passed through the waters of the sea, went to Mt. Sinai, and wandered in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land 40 years later.



Next, we see Jesus' life on earth, a life where He "relived" the story of the Exodus. He too went to Egypt with Mary and Joseph to escape from King Herod. He too left Egypt. He went through the waters of baptism by John the Baptist and preached on a mountain the Sermon on the Mount, which is about the very same commandments that God gave Moses at Sinai. Then He traveled into the wilderness to be tempted, as we will hear next week, by Satan. Then, by way of the cross, He entered into the Promised Land by His resurrection and ascension.



Now because He took that Exodus our lives retell the Exodus in a new way. We are called out of the slavery of sin through the waters of baptism. We are put in a relationship with God like the people at Mt. Sinai to live as God's people. We may wander in the wilderness of this life. But we follow Jesus through death into the resurrection on that Last Day when our Exodus will be complete forever with God.

That is the end that awaits all of us. That is what turns our Exodus from misery to joy.