

## “Transfiguration”

Mark 9:2-9

We come to the story of the Transfiguration in the Gospel of Mark, a beautiful, glorious story that leaves us all wondering, leaves us a little unsure of where do we go from here. We’ve seen and heard about the glory of the Lord,, now what?

The good news is that we are not alone in our wonderings. Even the three disciples who were on that mountaintop that day, were a little unsure of what to do next. They were unsure of how to continue being true to their calling as followers of Jesus, especially with this new life changing information. How do they respond to such life transforming news? This guy that they have been following around, this guy that they have seen heal people, this guy that they have heard preach about the Kingdom of God is no ordinary guy! This guy is the Son of God! They didn’t pick up on it before. Sure the signs were all there, but they didn’t really expect this ordinary man from Nazareth to be the Son of God.

This is big news! Now what? What was their next step as followers of Jesus? Where do they go after such an experience, an experience that filled them with awe and fear, an experience where the glory of the Lord shone all around? As disciples,

there on the mountaintop, what is their next step? How do they continue with their calling? Where do they go from here?

In our story today, Peter, bless his heart, tried the typical safe answer, the answer the church has been lifting up for years as the right answer. “Let’s just stay here and bask in the glow!” Peter wanted to stay on that mountaintop and build something that would become a center to hold the presence of God. He wanted to stay on that mountaintop and keep the glory all to themselves. He never wanted to leave the mountain again.

These three disciples had already experience the presence of God. They already knew that Jesus was the Son of God. They already had a close relationship with the Son of God. What else did they need? Why leave such a wonderful glorious spot to back go to the ugliness of the world, where there was violence and hurt? Why leave such a beautiful moment to go back to ordinary everyday life?

Because that is just exactly what Jesus did! Jesus came down from the mountain after his transfiguration and healed a little boy. Jesus left the glory and engaged this worlds’ suffering and hurt. Jesus left the mountain and engaged the people of God once more.

Mark wants us to understand that sure Jesus could have stayed up there on that mountain, but it would have been the easy way out. What good would that have done? If Jesus had stayed, his purpose, his very reason for being, would have

never been fulfilled. Sure, Jesus would have avoided the cross if he had stayed up there on that mountain, if he had let Peter build him a dwelling, but what good would have that done?

Jesus didn't come to play it safe and stay on the mountain. Jesus came to bring healing and wholeness for all of God's children. Jesus came to bring comfort to those in need. Jesus came to bring new life. All of which would have been impossible if Jesus had stayed on that mountaintop.

Staying on the mountain is wonderful and it is glorious but it is also safe. And that is not the way the Kingdom of God works. The Kingdom of God calls for more than just playing it safe. It calls us to take risks. It calls us to heal hurts. It calls us to speak for the voiceless. The Kingdom of God calls for us to reveal the image of God in others.

Sure, Jesus could have stayed on the mountaintop but thankfully he chose to come down again. Sure Jesus would have been safe if he had stayed on that mountain but thankfully he choose to continue to share the good news of God's love for all of God's children. Sure Jesus could have stayed on that mountain but thankfully he chose a different hillside to bring healing and wholeness for all. Sure, Jesus could have stay on that mountaintop but he decided to come down and change the world.

Jesus' ministry here on earth was to bring the Kingdom of God near for all of God's children and that would have been impossible to do from that mountaintop all alone. The true purpose of the transfiguration for Jesus was to reveal the image of God found in Jesus, to prepare Jesus for a different type of journey up a mountain, this time, becoming transformed for the world.

The only other time Jesus' true identity is revealed up to this point in the Gospel of Mark is at Jesus' baptism, the start of his ministry. Now it is revealed again, this time to the disciples, this time with a commanding statement, this time as a way to reassure. "This is My Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!"

And when we truly listen to him, we know what Jesus is calling us to do. When we truly listen to Jesus, we know what our next steps as followers of Jesus will be. Just like for the disciples on that mountaintop, when they heard the voice of God, calling them to listen, they knew that they could not stay on that mountain and keep Jesus all to themselves.

Jesus had never said that he had only come for just a few deserving ones. Jesus had always said that he had come for all of God's children.

In that moment, when the disciples heard the command to listen to Jesus, they understood that it was more than just glory they were experiencing at that moment. It was more than just a personal relationship with the Son of God. They were being changed. They were being moved from being receivers of wonder to

becoming people who were transformed and transfigured themselves, people in whom the image of God was revealed, and called to offer these wonders of glory and beauty to a broken and hurting world.

In that moment, the disciples realized that true discipleship is not about transcending life but about transforming life.

And that is the same good news that is being shared with us today. The transfiguration is not just a moment in time. It is an experience that happens each and every day of our lives as people of faith. Each day, the image of God that resides at the very core of our being is revealed to us and each day, we are called to reveal that same image of God found in others. We are called to leave our places of security and safety and proclaim that the Kingdom of God is among the people of God. We are called to proclaim God's grace and God's love from the highest mountains to the lowest valley. We are called to bring healing and wholeness to all of God's children.

Discipleship goes beyond a once in a life-time, transforming moment. Discipleship is a process that happens each and every moment of our lives when we truly experience the God within ourselves and the God that surrounds us. It is about changing ourselves so that we can change the world. And we do this with practice.

We need to keep practicing the transition from glory to suffering. We need to keep practicing the revealing of God in ourselves so that we can reveal the image of God in others. We need to keep practicing the journey that moves us from being passive, receivers of God's wonders, to becoming people transformed, actively proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

We are called to listen to Jesus, to be inspired by his teachings and his preaching, and to realize that there is another way, God's way, a way of life giving love and grace.

Each day we are offered an opportunity for transfiguration, an opportunity to be transformed, an opportunity to experience the glory of God and to engage the suffering of the world as followers of Jesus Christ, all of which would be impossible if we stayed up on the mountaintop alone.

We just need to keep practicing the transition from passive to active, to keep practicing the transition from leaving our four walls and meeting the God revealed in our neighbors and the world around us.

Our next step, now that we have experienced the glory of the Lord, is to come down off the mountain and bring healing and wholeness to all. We just need to keep practicing.

May we be transfigured and transformed as followers of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.