

“Transfigured and Transformed”

Luke 9: 28-36

the Transfiguration in the Gospel of Luke is a beautiful, glorious story that honestly leaves us all wondering what exactly do we do with this story. It leaves us a little unsure of where do we go from here. Don't worry. WE are in good company in our wondering and confusion. Even the most learned biblical scholars have differing viewpoints on the purpose and point of this story. So really the thing we need to ask ourselves is not what is the point of this story but now that We've seen and heard about the glory of the Lord, now what?

This is the question the three disciples who were on that mountaintop that day, asked and wondered themselves after this strange and glorious experience. Even they 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, as the only answer. “Let’s just stay here and bask in the glow!” Peter wanted to stay on that mountaintop and build something, something with four walls and a roof, maybe add gym and a fellowship hall. Peter wanted to build something that would become the center to hold in the presence of God. He wanted to stay on that mountaintop and keep the glory all for themselves. He never wanted to leave the mountain again. And why should he?

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 should they 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 world's suffering and hurt. Jesus left the mountain and engaged the people of God once more.

Luke 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 anybody? 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 that have done anybody? God didn't give Jesus to the whole world just to keep Jesus safe and secure. God didn't send Jesus to the world just so a few would experience a personal relationship with Jesus. God didn't send Jesus for the world just so that nothing would even be changed or be transformed.

God gave Jesus for the world 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. Jesus came to transform the world through love and grace. All of which would have been impossible if Jesus had played it safe and stayed on that mountaintop, stayed with the four walls Peter wanted to build, if he had stayed on that mountain all by himself.

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 chose 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 confirm the image of God found in Jesus, and to prepare Jesus for a different type of journey-this time a journey up a different mountain, this time, with a cross on his back, this time transforming the world for all of God's children.

The only other time Jesus' true identity is revealed up to this point in the Gospel of Luke is at Jesus' baptism, the start of his ministry. Now, at this turning

point in Jesus' ministry, it is revealed once again, this time to the disciples, this time with a commanding statement, this time as a way to reassure. "This is My Son, the Chosen. Listen to him!" Listen to him. He will tell you what the next steps will be. He will tell us about the Kingdom of God. Listen to him. Because just like what the disciples discovered, we will begin to understand that when we truly listen to Jesus, we know what we are called to do. Because when we truly listen to Jesus, we know what our next steps as followers of Jesus will be. Because Just like what happened 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 and when we truly listen to Jesus, we discovered the exact same thing. we cannot stay in our church buildings and keep Jesus all to ourselves.

We must listen to Jesus and truly hear what he is saying. In all the times that Jesus preached and taught, Jesus never said he came for just a few deserving ones. Jesus has always said that he came for all of God's children.

In that moment, when the disciples heard the command to listen to Jesus, they began to understand that it was more than just glory they were experiencing at that moment. It meant more than just a personal relationship with the Son of God for them. They were being changed and experiencing the Kingdom of God here on earth, a kingdom based on grace, based on love, based on community, a kingdom

where if one person hurts, we all hurt, and if one person is blessed, we are all blessed. In that moment, on the mountaintop, the disciples 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 reveal, and becoming the people God created them to be-people with a purpose, people with a mission, people with a calling to offer these life-giving, life-changing wonders of glory and beauty to a broken and hurting world.

In that moment, the disciples realized that true discipleship, the very reason they left their nets and followed Jesus was 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 being 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. We are called as Christ's disciples to leave the safety and security of our dwelling places and share this risky, dangerous, world

upside down turning grace that we have all experienced and claimed in our lives with all of God's children. Just listen to Jesus.

The true power and glory for the disciples on that mountaintop and for us as modern day disciples today and for all our days, is because we begin to understand that discipleship, the very reason we follow Jesus, 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 embrace the God within ourselves and the God that surrounds us. It is about changing ourselves so that we can change the world. And all we have to do is keep practicing and keep experiencing the Kingdom of God here on earth..

As disciples, 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 need to keep practicing becoming the people that God created us to be.

As disciples 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.

As disciples Each day we are offered opportunities for transfiguration, opportunities to be transformed, opportunities 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, stayed in our churches, stayed in our pews, safe and secure, but all alone.

So the answer to the question of What is next for us as disciples is that 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 is, now that we have experienced the glory of the Lord, is to come down off the mountain, leave our security, leave the safety of our churches and bring healing and wholeness to all and truly experience the power and glory of the Kingdom of God here on earth. Our next step along the journey is to keep practicing becoming the people, the community of faith that God has created us to be. We just need to leave the seemingly safe mountain top to do so. Our next step is to go out into this world and share the life transforming grace of God with all of God's children and to truly experience the power and glory of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

May we find the strength and the courage to truly be transfigured and transformed into the people and community of faith that God created us to be.

Amen.