

Luke 9:28-36 (New Revised Standard Version)

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

This passage that we just read from the Gospel of Luke describes
such an incredible & powerful mountaintop transfiguration of Jesus
that it was included by three of the four gospel writers,
and has meaning & application far beyond just the event itself.

After feeding the multitude of 5000 men plus more women and children,
Jesus describes what's going to happen to him in Jerusalem, vs. 22-23,

The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily **and follow me.**

Then, 8 days after that sermon, 3 of the disciples
went up the mountain with Jesus to pray, vs. 28~30,

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The details of this story are intended to identify who Jesus is,
and most importantly, to reveal and demonstrate his true glory.

Moses and Elijah help establish his continuity to the Old Testament,
which infers, that the events that will happen in Jerusalem
are all according God's healing and saving purpose and plan,
although at this point in time, before the resurrection,
the disciples have no idea what all this really means.

Peter was confused and overwhelmed by what they were seeing, vs. 32.

Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—**not knowing what he said.**

Amid that awesome event of divine Presence, Jesus enveloped in glory,
Peter responds to his uncertainty by wanting to preserve the moment,
perhaps a man-thing, he decides that he needs to build something -
- for sometimes it's easier to do than to contemplate what it means,

but then mercifully, God intervenes and redirects, vs. 34-35

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; **listen to him!**"

Listen. Don't do. Don't plan. Don't arrange. Just listen!

"Peter, stop trying to do, so that you can listen and receive."

Sometimes in life it's not so much about what God wants us to do
as it is that God wants us to pause, to notice and be blessed.

The text itself serves like a hinge, a marker or a divider,
between the early teaching and healing ministry of Christ,
and the culmination of that ministry
in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Prior to this narrative, Jesus had been describing discipleship,
teaching about the necessity of sacrifice and obedience to God
and telling about what was to happen shortly in Jerusalem.

The transfiguration event looks backward, fulfilling OT,
and also points ahead toward the coming events of Calvary,
and what Jesus would accomplish, as we read in the NT.

The point of the transfiguration was to prepare the disciples,
for ¹ the horrific events that were coming up in Jerusalem,

and ² to strengthen them to endure for that journey,

³ while equipping them to fulfill the Church's mission.

When I read about these stories of faith in the Bible, it helps me
to reflect on my own experiences along my journey of faith –
- the places and times, events of God's transforming power,

the Spirit's grace & presence that helped shape my life.

The truth is, our gracious God does want to bless us and sustain us
so, the issue is not whether or not God is present and with us.
The issue is our willingness to trust, wait and receive.

Onetime, many years ago, during our first year of marriage,
Kathy and I served on a weekend retreat team in Washington State,
and it was all absorbing, exhausting, and left us drained.

I was a group leader, a counselor and facilitator.
My group included several severely broken & wounded participants
struggling with drug & alcohol issues, family abuse & violence.
My task was to share Christ & try to explain our Christian hope & joy,
a new possibilities perspective to hurt, damaged & suffering people.

It was a wonderful experience and life changing for all of us,
but by the end, I was totally spent with had nothing left to give.
Facing at least a 9-hour drive back home after the retreat,
we considered a motel room, but our money was way too tight.

Then, along the way, nestled into the beautiful Cascade Mountains
we saw a hotel in a resort town that looked like a Bavarian village,
that was very enticing, quaint and obviously way over our budget.

Kathy was insistent that we stop at that hotel and at least inquire.

I was weary, cranky & tired, in one of my stubborn foul moods,
so, I didn't even want to stop, and I wouldn't go in and ask.
So, Kathy went in and came back out, smiling and waving a room key.

Actually, she didn't get a room, it was an incredible suite of rooms,
that even included our own porch and Jacuzzi, for almost nothing.
We spent a wonderful and restful night, then woke up refreshed.
We were fully restored, & gratefully praising & thanking God.

Now I know that there are any number of possible explanations,
but I was there, and we recognized God's love and blessings,
God's message, **trust me, I am always with you all along your journey.**

So, along your own spiritual journey of faith, where have you

encountered God and had moments of insight and inspiration?

What are some events that have helped you grow deeper in your faith? ,
or through which you experienced more clearly and recognized
the truth, hope & glory, and God's gracious provision for you?

Most Christians can point to their own, very personal experiences
of God's grace, power and mercy that are beyond our explanation,
that have helped reshape and redirect their journey of faith.

The message of our text today is, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

As we are moving into Lent, it is most appropriate to consider,
how the transfiguration connects with us and our life stories.

The truth is, for many of us and for much of our time & focus,
our lives are driven by endless demands, pressure & stress.
We live hearing too many other voices competing for our attention,
causing us to be too busy w/ too much noise **to hear God over the din.**

Sometimes we may even feel a bit guilty if we're only doing one thing,
or if we sit back for even a moment, for that is to waste time
when we could have been doing something more productive,
and so many of us regularly and self-righteously busily ignore
God's 2nd commandment, you know, the one about Sabbath and rest.

The transfiguration passage today is a helpful reminder and sign,
that we too are on our way toward Easter in Jerusalem,
with all the rich meaning, message & blessing of the Lenten season,
and most of all, a time of listening, for us to hear God speaking,
for us to receive all that God intends for us along our journey.

The season of Lent will begin this week with Ash Wednesday,
with a dinner then a worship service with our S&L children.

It is an important part and blessing of this season of Lent

for us to let go and be released from our life's distractions,
to stop the endless action, and just wait and listen to God,
in the silence, let our God who love us, speak grace to us.

In today's gospel, we hear, "This is my son, my chosen, listen to him".

During Lent I want to attend to my faith and to my walk with God
with as much focus and fervor **as when our dogs watched me eat bacon.**

It's essential to our spiritual life that we do take time to be still,

a time for quiet listening for God's voice and be in God's presence,
as we deliberately carve out some space in our busy lives
for getting to know, recognize and focus when Jesus speaks.

So, we may need to cut back on the competing claims for our attention,
if we are going to find, hear & recognize the voice & presence of God.

**But it's not really so much about our efforts trying to accomplish this,
as it's placing ourselves in a stillness where God can accomplish,
by slowing down from distractions that block the Spirit's call.**

**It's a spirituality of going to where we can be near our Lord,
in way that we can be spiritually open, aware and attentive.**

It's never a question of God's willingness to bless us or give.

The question, the only question, is our willingness to receive,
our willingness to accept God's gracious love and blessings.

The purpose and message of the transfiguration was preparation,
preparation for the terrible events and crash in Jerusalem,
a sacramental moment to equip them for the hard journey ahead,

so too for us, the quiet and the blessings at the Table of Grace today
are for us to pause, to draw near and reflect on our journey ahead
as our gracious God is preparing & equipping us for the road ahead.

So today, as we are approaching the Lord's Table for **Communion,**
let us consider the care, feeding and nurture of our souls,
the authenticity of our relationships with God & neighbor,
and whatever stands in the way of deepening our faith.

As the Lord has instructed & promised through Isaiah & Deuteronomy,

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;... from there, seek the Lord your God, **and you will find him** if you search after him with all your heart and soul.