

Transfiguration Sunday based on Matthew 17:1-9

“Metamorphosis”

Whenever someone climbs a mountain or when a cloud shows up in the Bible, you better pay attention. Something is going to be revealed about God.

Today Jesus is transfigured... metamorphosis in the original Greek of the New Testament.

In simple terms, Metamorphosis means to change form.

I remember the first time my dad showed me a Chrysalis of a monarch butterfly under our garage eve trough. We watched it for days. It was amazing. It looked dead.

You know the life cycle. An egg hatched into a larvae known as a caterpillar. Caterpillars feed on several times their own weight each day, growing until it's time to pupate. During their pupal stage, butterflies create chrysalides. Inside their Chrysalides, they go through an incredible change that completely destroys, then recreates, their body form. They come out transformed as butterflies.

As Peter, James, and John join Jesus on the mountaintop, Jesus was completely transformed, radiating with light. Many scholars believe this was a foretaste of the feast to come in the resurrection on Easter.

Transfiguration Sunday is always the last Sunday in Epiphany before we start the season of Lent. Lent is our time to eat several times our body weight and form a cocoon around us. Right??? Not really. But it is a time to make changes and prepare for the feast to come that is Easter. To practice the disciplines of Lent like fasting, prayer, works of love, and repentance. Pick one discipline this lent to practice.

On the mountain Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. How did they know it was Moses and Elijah?

And right when Peter spoke up and said, “Master, this is a great moment! What would you think if I built three memorials here on the mountain – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah? Peter wanted a place to come and worship and remember this God moment. Can you blame Peter? Sometimes when we have mountaintop experiences, you want to stay there, like at camp or on a mission trip.

But just as Peter was going on and on, a cloud came upon them, much like during the Exodus or at Jesus' baptism, and the voice of God said, "This is my son, the beloved, listen to him."

Matthew tells us "When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear."

Perhaps, because earlier in the Gospel, every time Jesus predicted his passion... that he must suffer and die and in three days rise again, the disciples wanted none of it. Suffering and death were not a part of the equation for their idea of a messiah. They were not listening or comprehending Jesus' words. They were afraid

Fear has a tendency to paralyze us. What do you fear?

For the disciples, when they were paralyzed by fear, Jesus came up to them and touched them and spoke a word to them, "Get up and do not be afraid." They got up and went down the mountain with Jesus where they will continue to learn from Jesus that his true glory isn't found in that moment of transfiguration. He still has a journey to complete. He needs to head down the mountain. Jesus' journey will go through the cross. In other words, Jesus will not just be identified with times when things go well, but in suffering and loss as well.

This is such good news to me. God is present with me when I fail, or when I suffer, or when life is overwhelming. God isn't present only in my successes.

In this Transfiguration story, the baton of scripture is being passed from Moses, who represents the law the Torah in the Bible to Elijah, who represents all the prophets, to Jesus, who is now the fulfillment of all scripture. We are left alone with Jesus.

To me, this story of transfiguration has deep implications on how we understand scripture. All of the law and prophets must now be read through the lens of Jesus Christ. They must be interpreted through the great commandments to love God and love the neighbor as yourself.

Jesus' word to us today is also "Do not be afraid." He touches us today in the Word, music, fellowship, and Holy Communion. Here

Jesus gives us his body and blood to lift us from our fears. Jesus' word is life giving. It moves us from death into life.

May you too be transformed by God's Word and God's love. And may you know that Jesus insisted on not basking in his glory on the mountain, but came down with us in mind.