

Transfiguration Sunday – February 11, 2024

“Most of Life is Lived Down the Mountain”

Welcome to the Transfiguration. This day marks the end of the season of Epiphany before we start Lent on Ash Wednesday.

On the mount of transfiguration, we get a foretaste of the Feast to come at Easter when Jesus will be raised from the dead, but first, Jesus and his disciples will come down the mountain and head toward the cross.

Perhaps you have had mountaintop experiences in your life where your cup is running over, your faith is strong, and you feel close to God. For me, those have been at Bible camp, or Youth Gatherings, or on mission trips... or even ice fishing enjoying God's good creation. You want to stay in that moment. But the reality is, most of our lives are lived down the mountain.

We all experience “cross moments” in our lives. Who here doesn't have family conflict, or grief, or a new diagnoses, or failures, or disappointments, or laments? Who has no problems?

In the Gospel, Jesus is transformed (metamorphosis in the original Greek) wearing dazzling white clothes along with guest appearances from Moses and Elijah. Peter, not knowing what to say, blurts out to Jesus that he wants to build three dwelling places or tents so they can keep coming back to this place and basking in the glory of this Mount Rushmore of Biblical heroes. But then a cloud overshadowed them and a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, Listen to him.” Suddenly Moses and Elijah disappear, and they are left with Jesus alone.

What does it mean that we are left with Jesus alone? I view this text as a passing of the torch of how to interpret scripture. Moses represented the law and Elijah the prophets. Now all scripture is fulfilled in Jesus. We now read the Bible through the lens of Jesus'

life, death, and resurrection, through the dual commandment to love God and love the neighbor as ourselves.

Listen to him. Were the disciples not listening to Jesus? Apparently not. The targeted audience for God's voice is Peter, James, and John. They weren't listening to Jesus, especially when Jesus talked about his upcoming passion and death. He predicted his passion 2 times up to this point, and Peter scolded Jesus. Can you blame Peter? When you are in a moment of glory, or thinking the Messiah cannot suffer, who wants to talk about death and dying. We struggle with this conversation in general as humans. But it is one we should have.

Jesus' true glory will be revealed on the cross, hence the reason they left the mountain. We can't we just skip ahead to Easter... to the trumpets, alleluias, and triumph.

Why do we even have to go through Lent? Isn't there an easier route where we don't have to make changes in our lives, fast from anything, confess our sins, pray, or give alms to those in need?

Think about it, if we didn't have the cross... if the Gospel ended here, then we would only know a God when things are going well in our lives... in our glorious times.

But the life of faith is cruciform.

The good news for is that Jesus came down the mountain. He enters into our cross moments in life. Jesus didn't bask in the glory of the transfiguration. He knew his true identity involved a cross. He will soon climb a hill called Golgatha. Our God in Jesus Christ will show his strength and glory in apparent weakness.

Today, Jesus comes to us just as we are. He loves us, accepts us, and forgives us as is. Jesus came down the mountain for us when we fail, fall short, hurt others and ourselves, and neglect putting God first in our lives.

Jesus Word and sacrament can transform us. It can redeem our cross moments and give us hope. Yes, the resurrection is coming, but the

cross comes first. And that's where God meets us, in the nitty gritty of life. Amen