

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

Year B
RCL

- [2 Kings 2:1-12](#)
- [2 Corinthians 4:3-6](#)
- [Mark 9:2-9](#)
- [Psalm 50:1-6](#)

Proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven has arrived is dirty work!

Healing people of illnesses that they've had for years. Casting out demons.

Traversing both the country side and the city. With no place for the son of man to lay his head, there is no place for him to do his laundry. It would be a good Tide commercial, yes? Tide, gets out any stains better than the transfiguration itself!

All jokes aside, this moment in Jesus' life is a preview of the resurrection, a revealing of who Jesus truly is- both divine and human. Before we begin the darkness of Lent, this is a glimpse of the radiance shimmering at the end of a tunnel. This is a present for the disciples, a flash of light that shows them that even one bit of hope can carry them through

the hard things they will endure. We talk a lot about transformation here. But the difference we experience in the Transfiguration is that transformation is about being changed in some way from one state to another. But to transfigure means to see something or someone for what or who they really are. This is about exposing Jesus' real identity and an assurance for what lies ahead.

I was struck in particular how in this passage God speaks to all of us in whatever learning style we have. God is always trying new and creative ways to connect with us. Imagine with me you're a fly on the wall, watching this scene all unfold. You find yourself climbing a mountain- maybe a little out of breath- feeling your legs getting heavy underneath you. But you've made it and you can see for as long as your eyes can across the valley below. Relief settles in. Can you smell and feel the dust, the dirt, the rocks on the mountain? Can you feel the cloud misting on you? The cool dots of water landing softly and gently on your skin. Can you sense the great darkness enclosing all around you? Can you see Jesus, made clear and popping out from the background of the cloud, shining in

front of you? Before your eyes two additional figures arise. Last but not least, can you hear God speaking?

“This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!” For what are we listening? And, do we have any idea what that means? When the cloud overshadows them, we’ve seen the word for overshadow only once before in scripture. And that is when the angel Gabriel is speaking to Mary and talking about how the Holy Spirit will work to bring forth Jesus in her womb. Possibility comes out of this word in a multitude of ways in what would be a true paradigm shift for the disciples. A change in perspective that influenced their lives forever and from which they could never return.

On this mountain top, the past, present, and future collide. What is real and what is holy is revealed to us. These are stories of immense suffering under oppression, plagues, miraculous acts and Promised Lands. Stories of prophecies, the next generation, and a fiery ascension being returned to God. Stories of God breaking into the world with God’s beloved. Stories of what is and what will become. A grave darker than the darkest night and the dazzling radiance of that first Easter morning. It

seems with all the change around us, we remember and not always with accuracy, the warm fuzzies of the past. Maybe some regrets or how we'd do things a bit differently, but there's comfort in that notion of the past than looking ahead into the unknown. Looking back and holding on to what was, instead of what could become. How do our visions of the past get us stuck in a wrong interpretation of the present or future? It's the future that leaves us unhinged with fear- just like Peter.

Even though we know that God is with us in the past, present, and future, it is still hard to imagine the future. When we think of the future, in the words of Debie Thomas, "how does glory on the mountain speak to agony in the valley? What does it mean that they share a landscape? Can a love song on a pinnacle reach a scream in the depths?" Even if we discover new wonderful revelations on the mountaintop and in the valley, it can still come with a healthy dose of fear. There will inarguably be terrifying moments in our futures. Moments that brings us fear and wondering or joy and confidence. And yet, in those valleys or on those mountains, they are one. They are in continual conversation because one blends into the other

seamlessly because God is in it. The glory of Jesus in the transfiguration asks us to be altered by the revelation of who Jesus is, to trust in that, and to follow where it leads.

I don't want to get ahead of myself but Ash Wed falling on Valentine's Day causes us to do a double take. A true love song. Ashes transfigured by God. In opposition of the Tide ad, we as humans are not a bunch of stains that need to be cleaned or bleached. We are beautiful and beloved ashes intricately and intimately connected to God. When we hear that we are dust and to dust we shall return, we understand who we really are and who God really is.

So how do you hear Jesus speaking to you in his transfiguration? Are you hearing something from the past? Or maybe you know that you've spent too much time in the past or future and you need to be in the present for a bit. Or, maybe your heart is being pulled toward a vision of something exciting, a bit scary, in the future. It might not be clear to you or

it might be as clear as Jesus standing out against the dark background of a cloud. As we begin Lent in 3 days, remember the brilliance from this day- let it carry you through the long and winding road of Lent- all the way to the cross--- to the grave--- and to the resurrection.