

Luke 9:28-45, Jesus is transformed and we begin our journey in Lent

The story of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain is a turning point. It is the transitional story between the ministry in Galilee and the journey to Jerusalem. Within the story are many connections between the past and the future, both on a large scale of Creation and in the small scale of the life of Jesus.

The voice from heaven reminds us of the same voice that came to Jesus at baptism. The choosing of Peter, James, and John, and their subsequent extreme tiredness is a foreshadowing of their time in Gethsemane. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus withdraws to pray, chooses the same three disciples to stay awake, but they are not able. The transformed face and clothes are a foretaste of Jesus' resurrection and eternal glory.

The presence of Moses and Elijah function as a bridge between the Israelites' collective past and future. Both Moses and Elijah had divine interactions upon a mountain. Both came down from the mountain and faced frustration and rejection from the people. Ultimately, both had mysterious deaths that were more accurately described as 'departures.'

All of these things make this a perfect text for the last Sunday before Lent. This is the Sunday when the Church shifts from the season of Epiphany to the season of Lent. Epiphany is a time of revelation, knowledge, and getting to know who Jesus is. The season of Epiphany is connected to the Galilean ministry, as Jesus reveals glimpses of who he truly is.

After Transfiguration though, we are now in a season of Lent. Like Jesus, we come down off of the mountain and point our faces toward Jerusalem. The season of Lent is a time of moving toward the Cross.



Mount Tabor in Galilee, the traditional site of the Transfiguration. Its peak is 1,843 feet, which is modest but quite imposing considering the vast lowlands that surround it.

We make this shift in the gospel story and we will make a similar shift in our worship.

As we begin our journey of Lent it is good to look backwards and forwards. We look back to baptism, to the coming of the Holy Spirit, to the call to "repent and believe the good news." We look forward to the Cross like Jesus who decided to go to Jerusalem knowing what lie ahead.

We repent, which literally means "to turn." We turn toward the Cross. We assess our relationship with God. We tell the truth about our shortcomings and make a plan for growth. We aim for Jerusalem and the Cross knowing that the path is not always straight.

Like Peter, James, and John, it is our duty to remain awake to experience the fullness of Christ's glory. We stay awake through fasting, prayer, devotion, and sabbath. Like them, we come down from the mountain of Transfiguration thankful for the promise of eternity and go about following Jesus.