

### Jesus Transfigured on the Mountain

Robb McCoy

Transfiguration Sunday is a moment of transition, both in the Gospel story and in our Church calendar. The story of Jesus being transformed on the mountain and appearing with Elijah and Moses to three of the disciples serves as a moment that connects baptism, passion, and resurrection. It also serves as a turning point between Jesus' ministry and his journey to Jerusalem. And in our Church year, this is the Sunday that shifts us from the season of Epiphany to the season of Lent.

In this passage we have an outline for how to be disciples.

1. Recognize that Jesus is the Christ, sent from God.
2. Deny yourself and take up your cross daily.
3. Stay awake. Do not miss the glory.
4. Also, do not linger too long and miss real life.
5. Listen to Jesus.

The culmination of the Galilean ministry and the season of Epiphany come together in the first part of the passage. The rumors are flying. Jesus is well known, and people are talking.

Think back to what we have witnessed thus far. He has raised a girl from the dead, healed a Centurion's servant, cast out demons, and healed others who are sick. He has taught with remarkable authority and confronted religious hypocrisy. The Herodian court has revealed itself to be violent and cruel with the death of John the Baptist. Finally, Jesus raised a well-fed legion of 5,000 men and instead of marching to Jerusalem, he withdrew to pray.

In the midst of the confusion and rumors, he asks the disciples the question we must all ask ourselves: "Who do you say that I am?" And when Peter declared, "You are the Christ sent from God." Yet this is not enough. Jesus has to explain what it means to be the Christ.

It includes self-denial. This does not mean self-inflicted suffering or losing yourself so much as to be abused or exploited. Self-denial means that doing what feels good right now may not be what is needed for the greater good. It means that you must consider how your

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actions affect other people. Following Christ is not always easy. It is not always popular. It means that sometimes we have to put up resistance to harm that is being done to others, even if it makes us vulnerable.

With that established, Jesus takes his inner circle up to the mountain. There, they experience a miraculous vision that includes Elijah and Moses. Yet they almost miss it. Like they will do in Gethsemane, they are almost overcome by sleep. "Stay Awake!" Do not miss the action. Do not miss what God is doing.

But also, don't linger. We are called to be in the world. We need to see the suffering. We need to see the injustice. We need to stay awake to what is happening in the world so that we may respond. We cannot escape to the mountain and watch the world burn. Following Christ is a wide-awake activity, not an escape to another realm. There are moments of transformation and glory, but that is now where we stay.

Finally, when the voice of God declares, "This is my Son... listen to him." We can't help but recall the baptism of Christ, when the voice of God said, "You are my son..." At baptism, God spoke to Jesus and empowered him to begin his mission. It was made clear to Jesus who he was and that he was sent out. Here, the voice of God is reminding us. "Listen to him." This is the heart of discipleship. We must listen to the voice of Jesus.

As we begin our journey to Jerusalem, and our Lenten journey to Easter, knowing Jesus is the Christ is not enough. We must take up our cross, stay awake, get into the world, and listen to him.