

Transfiguration Sunday

Title: Grace will arise

Texts: Mark 9:2-9; 2 Kings 2:1-12

Mark 9:2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Introduction:

THE EXPLORER by Anthony DoMello

The explorer returned to his people, who were eager to know about the Amazon. But how could he ever put into words the feelings that flooded his heart when he saw exotic flowers and heard the night-sounds of the forests; when he sensed the danger of wild beasts or paddled his canoe over treacherous rapids?

He said, "Go and find out for yourselves." To guide them he drew a map of the river.

They pounced upon the map. They framed it in their Town Hall. They made copies of it for themselves. And all who had a copy considered themselves experts on the river, for did they not know its every turn and bend, how broad it was, how deep, where the rapids were and where the falls?

It is said that Buddha obdurately refused to be drawn into talking of God.

He was obviously familiar with the dangers of drawing maps for armchair explorers.

Jesus takes 3 of his disciples up a mountain. A place known for its thinness – where heaven and earth come close. And he is transformed before them. Literally metamorphosis. He is changed in front of them. Some say this is a resurrection experience written earlier into the gospel. Perhaps Mark, Matthew and Luke, as pastors knew that followers of Christ needed to get glimpses of hope before they walked through the valley of suffering, entered into full view of our passions – the struggles within.

It is fitting that just before we enter Lent on Wednesday, we too are given a glimpse of Easter Sunday. A glimpse of the transformation or transmutation that comes from the struggle.

Especially as 'terrified' or 'fearful' disciples we prefer to build a booth or a statue or frame a map to mark someone else's experience than embark on the journey ourselves.

A word about fear.

Fear comes in many forms:

- Feeling Apprehensive
- Being Terrified
- Blaming
- Nervousness
- Jealousy
- Feeling Unsure or
- Timid or
- Worried or
- Inadequate or
- Threatened or
- Insecure or
- Powerless

For some of us it fuels an action that is often disconnected from wisdom.

Fearful busyness or bluster is a flurry of energy and often creates turmoil for others, missing the real issue at stake.

Fear comes out of our fixations. That is our patterns of thinking that is a habit of mind.

It's the habit of mind, the habit of attention that is essentially there to minimize focussing on the very thing we need to deal with.

Fixation usually keeps my focus on certain things. Like:

- I need to fix this
- I need to show that I am right
- I need to point out all the things that aren't right here
- I need to look for something else, something newer, better, shinier
- I need to keep order
- I need to challenge this

Usually, the fixation isn't wrong. It's just a very limited view of reality.

The fixation is to kind of manage suffering, but it also doesn't let it get healed.

It kind of keeps it in place. It postpones dealing with it.

https://www.audible.ca/pd/The-Enneagram-Audiobook/1683645804?ref=a_library_t_c5_libItem_&pf_rd_p=a00014e8-d2ee-472f-a5f3-837e4e395ee4&pf_rd_r=P5G62369E72C4WGS24XA

An example:

21 years ago, I was new to Canada and studying theology. I was encountering feminist theologians for the first time. It was liberating.

Some South African friends, a heterosexual couple, came to visit me in that first summer, they embodied the theology that I was deconstructing. Over a delicious fresh Sockeye salmon lunch, we started talking about women leaders in the church. The conversation was alive, the room was filled with energy, yet one of my friends became increasingly uncomfortable, and all she could talk about was how we better wash the dishes before the food hardens and makes it impossible to clean.

Friends fear can unglue us. Let's be gentle with ourselves.

Many of you at St Catherine's have read the Vestry/AGM reports and particularly the St Catherine's budget and music ministry cuts. And fear is rising. Fear that may lead to an energy as if responding to a threat.

May I ask us to take a deep breath, to become aware of our patterns of fixations. And be in this moment with all the opportunities that are arising.

Every moment, each time we say hello to the present, to here, to now, to this... there are things we would rather not have to face.

And yet by turning to what is before us, there is much to learn.

And so I turn to the wisdom of a poem by David Wagoner:

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here, And you must treat it as a powerful stranger.

In the Shelter, Padraig O Tauma

A word about journey.

Elisha and Elijah offer such a journey in a process of chaos and transition. This is a story of letting go and transferring leadership, of handing over a vision from one generation to the next, of trusting what comes next.

I have always wondered why the oral tradition (now written in the account called 2 Kings) has this group of friends travelling to so many places.

First they journey...

- To Gilgal - place where the Israelites camped after crossing the Jordan
It's like the message there was remember when we first entered this place. We only had dreams, we took risks, we had some building to do and we had no resources to do it. Remember?

Next they journey...

- To Bethel – This is the sacred temple site (house of God) where Jacob dreams of the ladder to heaven. Before Israel was a community, there was one faithful person. One person who had a dream. And it was enough.

Next they journey...

- To Jericho – the most famous victory of the Israelites over the Canaanites
They remember what fear is. And what it meant to trust in a different way that seemed so ridiculous. For if you remember this was the time when the Israelites marched around the walls singing and playing instruments. Instead of fighting with weapons. They learnt to trust in new ways.

The last journey is to

- Jordan – the sacred river the Israelites parted to pass into the Promised Land
They were so close to the promise and the final obstacle of the river reminded them of the first obstacle of the Red Sea. And God made a way.

I have come to see this journey as revisiting the symbolic old places.

What interests me, is that it was at none of these places of the past that the final transformation took place. It was at a new place – an undisclosed location. Outside of usual time and known space.

And I am drawn to Elisha's process with the community who were in fear, in grief, in transition :

- **He acknowledges their questions and then he asks for silence.**

"Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

For friends – our deep terror, our fear, our insecurities.
When acknowledged can be transmuted.

Russ Hudson, teacher of the Enneagram and spiritual practice says that:

“It is it not within my personal power to transform or transmute anything.
I have to offer it up. But there's a process of learning what that means. What is the part that I
can do? What does it mean to offer it up?
It means, being willing to be with it. Being willing to be with the truth of it. Being willing to see
the truth of it.

And over time, it transforms what it was. This doesn't happen necessarily as quickly as our ego
would prefer. But if we really look back at the real transformations that we've had. Most of
them happen when we have our butt kicked.

And there's a moment where we see there's nothing more we can do, but we're still present
with the truth of the situation and it's like something else moves through us.

We've made it possible for something else to move through us.

In traditional Christian terms, it's like cooperating with grace.”

Those who have journeyed this way have drawn a map that shows if we stay with the fear –
Grace will arise.

Now “Go and find out for yourselves.”

Amen.