



Last Sunday after The Epiphany, February 15, 2026

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
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Exodus 24:12-18

2 Peter 1:16-21

Psalm 99

Matthew 17:1-9

O God, who before the passion of your only begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Today is the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany – the season of light that celebrates the incarnation of Jesus as the light of the world, shining in the darkness. Our lessons today bookend the beginning of Epiphany which started with Jesus' baptism. Here we learn of Jesus' transfiguration, his face shining as the sun and clothes brighter than the brightest white. The transfiguration gives us a glimpse at the transcendent, of what resurrection life will look like, so that we can mold our lives to reflect God in his kingdom, right here, right now on earth.

This transfiguration happens in the later part of Jesus' ministry. In the chapter preceding this passage, Jesus spent much time teaching his disciples that he would undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed by the rulers, and three days later he would rise. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem to experience these events will begin soon in his ministry, and our journey into Lent to also experience these events in our time begins next week with Ash Wednesday.

A few days after Jesus was teaching his disciples, he takes Peter, James and John up on a high mountain. It is thought to be Mount Tabor, which is south from where they had been in Caesarea Phillipi. The six days would have been enough time to travel the distance.

In my pilgrimage to Israel in 2023, we went to the top of that mountain. It would be quite a hike, very steep in some places, to get to the top on foot. We took a bus! The view is incredible with nothing to block the expanse in any direction.

As Jesus was transfigured, according to the scripture, he was changed. From its Greek roots, the word transfiguration means to be transformed, to change form. It is not a superficial transformation, but a profound, radical and complete metamorphosis in structure or appearance.¹

Our Old Testament lesson describes Moses going up on a different tall mountain to be with God. Shortly after this passage, when he returns from his forty days and forty nights with God, his face is shining so brightly, he must wear a veil when he interacts with the Israelites. As one commentator said, "The glory in Moses' face is not his own, but is God's glory, temporarily reflected on Moses' body. Likewise, Jesus' shining face and his dazzling white clothes also reflect God's glory; reflected in, not necessarily transferred to, the person of Jesus."¹

As Jesus appears in this transfigured state, Moses and Elijah suddenly appear with him and they begin talking to each other. I wonder what that conversation was about. Was it a pep talk for Jesus before he undergoes his suffering, death and resurrection? Were these his friends from that heavenly realm offering energy, and sustenance to help Jesus remain focused on his purpose for his incarnated life? We will never know.

But what we can see with this visit with Moses and Elijah is that they are very much alive and probably appear similar to Jesus with shining brightness, a sure sign of the transformation we can also expect as we are made new.

Peter reacts to the events by exclaiming that it is good they are there to witness this and suggesting the disciples make shelters for the three. The transfiguration is such an awe-inspiring experience, and he wants to commemorate it in some way, to do something! It is not unlike what we might do when we have had a mountaintop experience that is so extraordinary it is almost impossible to describe with words.

As is the case with most Christian sites in Israel, a church is built over the area where the transfiguration was supposed to have happened. The center of the church is dedicated to Jesus and his transfiguration with incredible artwork depicting the scene, while the chapel to the right is dedicated to Moses and the one on the left to Elijah. So, in the end, perhaps Peter's wish did come true.

And like at Jesus' baptism, God claims that Jesus is his Son with whom he is well pleased, and adds, "Listen to him." Keep in mind that this is the first time these disciples have heard this as they were not present at Jesus' baptism. The call to listen is perhaps a push for the disciples to really hear what Jesus has been telling them in his ministry and especially what Jesus was showing them in the days before this encounter. And it is a push for us today, to listen!

Then the encounter is over and everything seems to go back to normal. But as we hear in our Epistle reading from second Peter, the experience had a tremendous effect on the three disciples. This transfiguration happens shortly after Jesus has asked his disciples who people were saying he was, and Peter responding that he was the Messiah. Here God confirms to the disciples and to us exactly who Jesus is.

And the same can be said for us. As followers of Jesus, we are transformed, we are changed, just as Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. It is not a superficial transformation, but a complete and profound change. As Jesus' disciples, we are called into resurrection life and to be a catalyst to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth.

What does that look like for you or for me? Let's go back to the beatitudes we studied a few weeks ago, the charter of the Kingdom of God. We learn that blessings from God come to those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are peacemakers, who show mercy and who are ridiculed and reviled for Jesus' sake.

We are human, so the likelihood of us being able to do all of these things all the time is impossible. But as Father David suggested, we can experience a little part of each of these

attributes throughout the course of our lives. And we can make intentional decisions to live into this Kingdom of God as we move through our lives.

For me, that is what the transfigured Jesus is – a glimpse into what our life to come will be like, giving us a taste of how we can be now as we look forward to what is to come. I think of Paul's letter to the Corinthians – now we see dimly like a reflection in a mirror and then, we shall see face to face. The promise that this all will become clear.

My glimpses involve the work we have been doing as a congregation on building bridges and healing divides, working for equity and ways to bring us together. It's studying how to be a deep listener to heal divides; not so that I can change the other person's mind, but to try to understand how and why that person thinks differently from me. It's looking for ways to love my neighbor, providing food when I can, like we did for our friends from the Center for New Directions and continue to do with our reverse offerings, providing a meal for my neighbor who recently lost her mother, inviting our neighbors who are recent widows to join us for dinners, and more. It's trying to live my life authentically and working hard to keep my ego in check.

This glimpse into resurrection life is all around us, if we take the time to look for it. Tangible examples include things like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly, or the awakening of spring, which is right around the corner. It is also how we can live -- it is the transformation that takes place when forgiveness is offered; the miracle that can happen when we offer love to someone, even though they are not loving toward us; the feeding of our souls when we choose to live life with abandoned abundance acting as a conduit of compassion, mercy and joy, rather than hoarding these gifts thinking they are too scarce to share.

Resurrection is another word for change, but particularly positive change. Resurrection can be an unfolding for us as our faith continues to awaken.

As Jesus told us in our scriptures last week, we are the light of the world. When we spend time in God's presence, we become mirrors of God's light. Just as Moses and Jesus did after their encounters with God. These little resurrections that happen for us in our daily lives enable us to live more fully into this light of Christ and in turn to become Christ's light for others. Our invitation is to go live as fully as we can into our resurrection life here and now.

1. Adapted from commentary by Eugene Park, Dana and David Dornsife Professor of New Testament, San Francisco Theological Seminary of the University of Redlands