

“Transfiguration Anticipation”
Exodus 24:12-18; Matthew 17:1-9

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Ever since Christmas, we’ve been noticing rough parallels between Jesus and Moses. As a child, Jesus and his family spend time in Egypt. Moses was born in Egypt. Jesus goes up on a mountain and teaches his disciples about the law. Moses goes up on a mountain and God gives him the law. Matthew wants his readers to notice similarities between Jesus and Moses.

Today, six days after Peter’s pronouncement that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus goes up on a mountain with three of his closest followers: Peter, James and John. In Exodus, Moses goes up on a mountain with his assistant, Joshua. They wait for God for six days.

On the mountaintop, Jesus changes. “His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white.” In the ancient world, no one could run out and buy a gallon of bleach. Dazzling white clothes is a sign you are a divine being. The change in Jesus’ clothes is proof of what we already know – Jesus is divine. We learned that back at Christmas, when Mary, the mother of Jesus, is found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. That time, we read it. Now we see it. Jesus is fully human and fully divine.

On the mountaintop, Jesus changes. He is transfigured before their eyes. They can clearly see Jesus is divine.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah are there. Moses represents the law. Elijah represents the prophets. Recall the purpose of the law and the prophets is to help the people come closer to God. Each in their own way draw the people closer to God. Jesus is the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. In Jesus, the work of Moses and Elijah is complete. Jesus is the one who draws us completely to God.

Peter, maybe it’s the altitude or maybe he’s just overcome by it all, in any case Peter starts babbling. “Lord, it’s good we are here. We can make some huts for the three of you.”

And then, a bright cloud covers them. Just like we saw in Exodus. Again, this is the ancient world. If you are on a mountaintop and suddenly you are surrounded by a cloud, you are in the presence of God!

And then, just like in Exodus, a voice speaks from the cloud. Whose voice is it? We're in a cloud, there's only one voice it can be. God says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

Can you imagine what that must have been like? To see Jesus transfigured, right there!, and then to hear that voice? "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him." Wow! To see Jesus change. To be so close to God, God's voice rings in our ears. To be so close to God we shine with God's reflected glory.

Who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't want that experience? I would. I'd love it. I'd do it in a heartbeat. The rush alone would be fantastic.

But how? How can we do that? How can we get that close to God? Climb a mountain? Climb that mountain?

No, we don't have to climb a mountain. Getting close to God is not that hard. God tells us what to do. Listen to Jesus. That's all. It's that simple. Listen to Jesus! Do what he wants us to do!

And what have we heard from Jesus? These last few weeks we've been hearing about caring for the poor, the powerless, being peacemakers in the community. Last week we heard about personal behavior. Living a moral life. Soon, we'll learn about resisting temptation. We'll learn about suffering. We'll learn about carrying our cross.

Being transfigured doesn't require climbing a mountain. It's not that hard. We just need to listen to Jesus and do as he says.

As Christians, we know someday we will be transfigured. After we finish our walk with God in this life, we will change. We don't know what that change will be. Maybe we'll have halos, wings, white gowns. Maybe we'll look like we did in this life, only better. Maybe we'll be pure energy or exist only as Spirit. I don't know. Nobody knows. But we do know it will happen.

Transfiguration. It's going to happen. But we don't have to wait until we die. We can start now. We can start being changed, transfigured, this week, today, right now if we want.

The Holy Season of Lent begins this Wednesday. I hope you'll be here for the service on Wednesday night at 6:30. There will be communion and, for those who want it, the imposition of ashes.

This year, let's use Lent to strive to be a little bit transfigured. What do you think, can we do that? Can we listen to Jesus and work towards being transformed, transformed more and more into the kind of people God wants us to be? We may not get all the way. If your face glows and your clothes are suddenly dazzling white, please tell me. But we can make progress. We can get closer. We can be more and more the people God wants us to be.

We don't have to climb a mountain. All we have to do is listen to Jesus and follow him. This is how much God loves us. Thanks be to God. Amen.