

,Epiphany Last C 2019
March 3, 2019 :: Luke 9:28-43a
Fr. Jim Cook

“On Being Transformed.”

Try to imagine that you live in the Holy Land — in Israel — and it’s 2,000 years ago, and you are one of the twelve disciples. One day, Jesus asks you, and a couple of the others, to go away with him. He doesn’t say where or why, but you figure that Jesus simply needs some rest and relaxation, and some company to boot. So, off you all go, walking and chatting, and heading towards the high country.

When you arrive at your destination, you recognize it as a place that, for generations, has been set aside for prayer and meditation; that it’s a place to encounter God. It’s then that you begin to think that maybe this is not going to be an ordinary retreat. All of a sudden, you can see that Jesus is changing, that his clothing and face are becoming dazzling white. You’re not sure what it all means, but, you know something extraordinary is happening.

Then, you are startled again to see the two most honored leaders of your faith — Moses and Elijah, both long dead —

standing there beside Jesus. You don't know what to think, or even what to do. But your friend Peter suggests setting up some shelters, but before anyone can respond to Peter's suggestion, something else happens: A dense fog envelops the whole area where you are standing, and then, and seemingly from everywhere, you hear the unmistakable voice of God, saying "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

Now you know the purpose of this adventure. Now you know what you should do. It's clear that you are not to look to Moses and Elijah — you are not to look back to the old — but to reach forward to the new, listening to this Chosen One of God, and listening only to him.

And then, as suddenly as it came, the dense fog dissipates, and it's just you and the other two disciples, standing there with Jesus. But before you can ask any questions, Jesus says that it's time to go back down the mountain, and return to the others. And as you begin your descent, you realize that, although for the other nine disciples nothing will have changed, for you everything is different, because God has done a new thing in your life.

It should be easy for us, as Christians, to put ourselves in the place of Peter, James, or John. Because whether or not we realized it at the time, we've each had our own (if you will) "mountaintop experiences"; moments when we recognized the same Lord, and we heard the same message from God. Maybe it happened in the midst of worship, or during a Bible study, or in a prayer group, or even when we simply met someone at a diner for a cup of coffee. But, usually, our "mountaintop experiences" have happened when we were alone, with only silence around us. This is our personal prayer time, when we are intentionally being still, so that we might know what God intends to *do* for us, and to *be* for us, and when we might learn what we can do and/or be for God.

Just like Peter, James, and John, during our "mountaintop experiences," we, too, can be astonished by the presence of God, and by the beauty of God's creation, and by the generosity of God's love. And, in those moments, we, too, listen most attentively to the beloved Son of God; listening for the words and the truths of Jesus our Lord.

And, finally, just like Peter, James and John, we too must return from our mountaintop experiences. We must return from those times of quiet and godly reflection, but we return with a

clearer understanding of what is possible for us in every part of our lives; that we can count on the amazing power of God to transfigure and transform and change what is old into something new; to change what is ordinary into something extraordinary.

God's transformations and transfigurations can touch every part of our lives. God can transform our sadness and frustration, and even despair, into joy and hope. God can transform our apathy, and lack of concern for his commandments, into an active love that brings God's kingdom more closely into being. God can transform our weakness and fear into courage and strength. God can transform our earthy, broken humanity into men and women who are living fully into their identity as the children of God.

Like those disciples, we live our lives at the bottom of the mountain. However, if we have heard the transforming word of God, and if we continue to listen to him, we will continually be reminded that, by the grace of God, we will be strengthened, despite whatever burdens we must bear, and that we will continue to be changed, transfigured, into the likeness of Christ — from glory to glory.

It is for this reason, therefore, that I invite you to join us for our four *Wednesdays in Lent* program. There, we will explore a couple of ways that we might be able to strengthen and deepen our relationship with God. First, by talking about what it is we do on Sunday morning in our corporate worship. And, second, by getting introduced to a form of prayer that, though it might start off as only a part of our Lenten discipline, it just might become an ongoing and important part of our spiritual journey.

I'll end by reminding you of some advice St. Paul offered to the Christians in Rome:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect” (12:2).

Amen.