

What's Next? Transfiguration Sunday

[Exodus 34:29-35](#), [Luke 9:28-43a](#)

Are we any different than we used to be? Think about some life-altering event in your life. Maybe it was the day you graduated from high school or the day you received your first pay check. Was it the day you were married or the day your first child was born? Was it the first time someone addressed you as 'sir' or 'ma'am'? I remember that one! What about the time you realized that you were a follower of Jesus Christ? Did that realization change you in any way?

I like the way today's scriptures parallel each other. The text from Exodus describes Moses returning from his encounter with God. Moses was carrying the tablets containing the words of the covenant between God and Israel – the Ten Commandments. But the most astounding thing was Moses' appearance – his face had this special glow that was so obvious it actually frightened the Israelites. There

was no question Moses had had an encounter with Almighty God.

His skin was glowing.

I am guessing we have said that about others at times. Have you ever walked up to someone and could see a certain 'glow' about him/her? It is often used to describe a bride on her wedding day, or a woman who is expecting a child. I remember watching the Disney movie, "Lady and the Tramp" when my daughter was young. My favorite scene was when 'Darling' was in one room with a bunch of women and they were exclaiming how 'radiant' she looks and how she seemed to have that familiar glow of a woman who was anxiously awaiting the birth of her child. Then the camera follows the dog Lady over to the room with all the men who were telling 'Jim-Deer' how terrible he looks! Apparently he had to make a lot of night runs to the market to satisfy 'Darling's' cravings so he wasn't

getting much sleep. So the men were laughing at how awful 'Jim-Dear' looked as opposed to how 'radiant' 'Darling' looked.

According to the scripture, Moses had a noticeable glow after his encounter with God. Jesus also displayed a similar glow. Jesus had gone up the mountain to pray and he took with him the big three – Peter, James and John. While Jesus was praying – speaking with God – his face and clothes changed in such a dramatic fashion it was not merely a sign of being transformed but transfigured.

Transfiguration is defined as “a momentary transformation of a man or woman into someone having the aspect of the divine.” The idea seems to be that this state of change is temporary. In Moses' case the people always noticed his change – the glow remained on his face. However in Jesus' case, the glow lasted only as long as they were on the mountain. Yet the power of that encounter seemed to lay the

course and determination for Jesus' ministry. Jesus had a clear path to follow through his ministry and his road to the cross.

When we travel, often there are landmarks along the way that help to give us our bearings. I find it interesting that Jesus was joined on the mountain by two very specific landmarks – Moses and Elijah. Landmarks are familiar to us – they help to guide us along our way. It is interesting that the gospel writer noted that Moses and Elijah were with Jesus and no one questioned their identity. I am guessing they did not wear nametags, so how did everyone know who they were? I am thinking that for the Jewish people in particular, these two figures were of utmost importance. Moses helped to lead the captives of Israel away from Egypt into the wilderness as a place of discernment on their way to the promised land. Elijah was the one who took on the priests of Baal and revealed the power of God, reminding Israel and Israel's king that they were God's chosen

people. You may recall parts of the story where the priests of Baal were challenged to call to their gods when a sacrifice was placed on the altar. After several attempts the priests failed. Elijah then called for the people to douse the sacrifice with buckets of water. He then called on Almighty God and fire fell from the sky consuming the sacrifice and everything around it. These two then were in essence the landmarks laid out for Jesus and his disciples. Perhaps they were helping to lay a path for the work of God.

So at long last we get to the title of my sermon for today –
What's next? It seems we all want to linger on those mountain-top experiences. There are times when we just don't want the vacation to end, or the school year to begin! We want to stay and bask in the glory of the moment. But Jesus reminds us there is still work to be done, and although we will have those mountain-top experiences, the times in the valley can be special as well. When we look at the rest

of the scripture from Luke today, we see Jesus and his disciples coming down from the mountain and getting right to work. I have no doubt that the mountain-top experience stayed with them as they followed Jesus throughout his ministry. This is true for us as well. Even when the mountain-top experience is technically over, we carry those memories for a very long time. Think of that tremendous vacation you took or that great time you had with family and friends – those times we cherish for a lifetime. Those memories can help us get through some of the more difficult times in our lives.

This holds true in our Christian life as well. I am sure each of us can remember good times we have had together filled with love and laughter, and we cling to those times when things get a little challenging (like when we start facing issues with parts of the roof coming off the Fellowship Hall or the pain of seeing those who use to be a part of this family of God turn away). There is a song that has a

line, “My God is a rock in a weary land, a shelter in a time of storm.”

We know we will have good times and bad, but we know who holds tomorrow and we know who holds our hand, Amen?

So back to the sermon title – What’s next? What is next for us here at Mt. Tabor? How do we continue to further our mission here in this location to our community? Tuesday we are hosting a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper that will help to mark our entrance into the Lenten season. Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, where we will have a service to commemorate our journey together as we head into the next six weeks toward Easter. This is an excellent time for us to reach out to God in prayer. Maybe God is calling you to a ministry, or perhaps you are unsure of what God would have you to do. Take this time during Lent to prepare for the celebration of Easter and what that means for us as Christians. We have been changed. We have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. We are not like those who can

only see the gloom and despair of every situation. We look to God who is our strength and our redeemer, Amen? We look to God who is our shelter in the time of storm, Amen? We look to God who carries us through the valley and walks with us every step of our Christian journey. We are not to be ashamed to share the good news that Christ died for our sins and we are set free through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is Transfiguration Sunday – let us go out and shine for the world. Amen.