

Mountains are Moments

Feast of the Transfiguration

Mark 9

February 11, 2024

St. Patrick's, Madison Heights

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May the God who creates us, redeems us, and sustains us, be with us this day, and remain with us always. Amen.

Good Morning!

I have long been annoyed that my life has not provided me with more mountain top experiences; more moments of spiritual certainty, wrapped in ecstatic jubilation. Those times when I know Jesus. Times when I have a clear sense of His place in my life. What about you? Has your life provided you with enough moments of divine understanding and theological comprehension?

Peter, James and John accompany Jesus up the mountain. And his ministry and their time together has been intense. Jesus has fed the 4000, he's healed the Syro-Phoenecian's woman's daughter, healed a blind man, a deaf man, and predicted His own death. And Peter has kind of pulled him aside and told him to not be so direct, to which Jesus replies, "Get behind me Satan." Then to impress the point and drive it home Jesus says, "Anyone who wants to follow me, must say, "No to yourself, and pick up the cross and follow me. "If you want to save your life," Jesus says, "you must be prepared to lose it." But if you do lose your life, because of me and because of the Good News, well he says well then, those people will save their lives.

And He says all of this to them just before their journey on up to the summit of the mountain. Peter, James and John, are no doubt reeling from these words, wrapped-up in processing them, and what this wild ride with Jesus means, and there they are following him on up the mountain. And there, while standing before them, He is transfigured: wrapped in and enveloped in an other-worldly brightness. And suddenly, we are told that Elijah and Moses appear on the mountain with him. (Now I'm actually unclear as to how the disciples know that it's Moses and Elijah who are standing next to him. I mean, did Elijah have a chariot with him, and did Moses show up with the two tablets...I mean we don't know this.)

But Peter, having seen Jesus talking with Elijah and Moses, no doubt thinks to himself, "Oh my goodness all that we've been through, oh my goodness, this is what it all means. The

fulfillment of it all. Now I understand. Now I know what's going on. My senses, my soul, and my spirit have been fortified. I believe. And I know for certain who you are."

In the midst of their terror, can you imagine how relieved they must be? Now they get it--for collectively they have had their mountaintop experience of certainty and ecstasy. And so wanting to maintain it, wanting to mark it, Peter does, what I do, or what anyone of us who might have been there might have done. Peter wants to mark the place this time with a shrine. Three shrines, that will forever say, that will ever remind us of a place and a time when the bright light obliterated the dark of doubt.

That's the thing isn't it. We have moments of spiritual knowing and theological comprehension, and our hearts are full, and we are sure of our paths. And then life happens, the world carries us along, and the memories and the feelings begin to fade. If you are like me, and no doubt Peter, James, and John, we begin to wonder, to worry, is it real? Is this the way? Jesus Christ are you with me, even now?

And perhaps we pray, dear God, offer me a sign, another mountain-top upon which your clarity will fill my soul.

But here is my question for all of us as we live our lives each day, *is theological certainty the reward and destination of faithful Christian life?* Has Jesus ever said, your doubts are gone, your fears relieved? Follow me to the mountain top and stay here forever. Or does Jesus call us to moments of insight and certainty and then say, "Let us go down, the people are waiting."

It might be easier if our souls were filled up once and for all, but *could it be that our souls like our physical bodies are never done developing, that they are always changing and need to be attended to and fed, nourished, and worked out regularly, daily, just like our biceps, quads, and pecs?*

Could it be that Jesus does not call us to mountain to build a house and stay. But instead, Jesus says, over and over again, "Come Follow Me...Pick up your mat and walk, Go and do likewise, Look I am sending you...Make disciples of all nations..."

Mountains are moments, certainty is transitory, the path is ever forward.

Amen.