

Up in the Clouds
Exodus 24:12-18
Transfiguration Year A
Grace, Detroit
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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.

“The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there...Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day God called Moses [from] out of the cloud...Exodus 24: 12, 15-16.

There is Moses at the bottom of Mt Sinai, and God calls him on up to the top of the mountain. And when Moses gets there, the clouds descend. And well if you think about it this may well be the first written documentation of someone with their head in the clouds...

What I find interesting is rather than this being an instance where the person with their head in the clouds is dreamy, distracted and out of touch with reality, Moses is anything but. Moses, going up high, and sitting as the clouds, the thick, dense fog descend and seemingly roll in from everywhere; climbing up and waiting there, for what must have seemed like an interminable time, as the movement of the sun is masked and diffused, this time of waiting, being able to see very little was in fact a time for clarity and a renewed vision for the people of Israel. Sticking his head in the clouds eventually gave Moses an epiphany.

I wonder if some of us, in the midst of the chaos of the world, I wonder if some of us might be too mired in the muck of cynicism and the fertilizer of despair. I wonder as I read newspaper article, after blog post, after Tik Tok reel with an algorithm finely tuned to my political perspective, I wonder if I am blinded by the realities of our world, to any possibility of hope? In my determination to not stand idly by, while immigrants, refugees and bystanders are arrested and detained without due process, I wonder if I am unable to see beyond the pain? I wonder if my anger and my fear are cataracts blinding me to hope. Perhaps you may find yourself in a similar position? Perhaps I and maybe you need a break, a metaphorical journey or a literal trip up a mountain, so that our heads may be in the clouds, and the blasting concerns of the day are muted and fading, enabling us to focus on the promise and presence of the Holy.

I wonder.

That metaphorical or literal journey up the mountain for Moses and for us, it sounds hard, it sounds like an exertion, and then up top, the Holy of Holies, takes God's own sweet time before appearing.

Moses waits in the gauzy fog for six whole days. He sits and waits. Again, we remember and say, "God works on God's own good time." I read this and I come to understand yet again, just how impatient I can be. I'd be alright climbing a mountain, working hard hiking up to the top, I'm happy to exert that energy. But once I arrive at the top, I'm the kind of person who wants her reward right away. I did the thing; now can I have my epiphany? I worked hard, where are you God.

This year, in the hopes of building some resiliency to the mean spiritedness I've seen exhibited by our federal government, I've been working hard, really hard on solidifying a contemplative prayer practice. Establishing a regular time, in a set space, early in the morning to sit in meditative silence, repeating a short prayer phase, for 20 mins. To attempt to clear my head of all thoughts to open myself to God's holy presence. Well not long ago I was complaining to my spiritual director, lamenting that I wasn't really sure if anything was happening. "I said to him, "I'm trying hard, I'm doing the things, I just know if anything is happening." To which he replied, "Well Bonnie, seems like you will just have to keep doing it to find out."

On the seventh day, after six days of waiting, God speaks to Moses from the cloud. And scripture tells us that the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on top of the mountain, clearly in the sight of the people Israel. Then Moses went back into the cloud for forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:17).

We know eventually Moses came back down, with the two tablets, the covenant, the Law and his face shone brightly because he had been speaking with God.

So what am I saying? What I'm saying to myself and to you is let us periodically leave the world for a time. Let us go and be, put our heads in the clouds and wait for the Lord. For the Lord has called us. The Lord will come. And we will be changed.

We will be renewed in hope and spirit and more than anything else we will know that we are not alone.

Amen.