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Narrative Lectionary 2.24 – The Transfiguration
Mark 8.27-9.8

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“Something to Hold onto”

What a fascinating story!

Jesus asks his disciples who people say that he is and they respond,

“...some say Elijah, and some one of the prophets”.

“And you?” asks Jesus. “Who do you say that I am?”

In a moment of pure intuition, Peter looks at him and exclaims, “The Messiah, of course!”

You can just imagine the picture in Peter’s mind and the pictures in the minds of the other disciples –

The Messiah was the one who would save them, make everything better, fulfill their hopes and dreams.

And then Jesus tells them that he’s going to Jerusalem...to die.

Peter protests! “NO! You’re not going to die! You’re the Messiah!”

But Jesus is firm.

Not only will he die, if they plan on following him,

they will need to be willing to give up their own lives as well!

Of course Jesus did say something about him rising from death and about them regaining their lives,

but they didn’t even hear that. They couldn’t get past the D word. Death!

And if Jesus, if God, had just left them there with that word,

they may have given up right then and there, turned tail, and ran.

Because vision matters. Destination matter. Goals matter.

If the disciples saw the end result as death, they would never get to life.

It’s the basic law of the universe.

What we focus on, what we expect, what we picture, is what we get.

That’s how God creates – God thought and spoke the universe into existence;

And that’s how God designed us to create.

Creation begins on the inside – with an inspired thought, fueled by intense feeling –

and then it manifests on the outside – in the circumstances of our lives.

Our lives are the stories that we are writing, the pictures we are painting, the sculptures we are we are crafting.

What we think about, we bring about.

But if that’s the case, then why aren’t we all living the life of our dreams?

Because sometimes what I want is not actually what I’m focused on.

Let me explain.

Scripture tells us that we were created in the image of the creator,

and then it goes on to say that we ate of the tree of good & evil, the tree of duality, the tree of faith & fear.

Think about something you want – hold it in your mind. Can you see it?

Now alongside the possibility of having that thing that you want, is the possibility of not having it, right?

Alongside the desire for something is the dismay at not getting it.

Alongside the faith that you’ll get it, is the fear that you won’t.

So if I want enough money to pay my bills, my focus must be on having it – not on not having it.

I must be filled with faith and not fear.

I must hold fast to the vision of what it is I want, and not let go or I will not be able to bring it into being.

If I am holding onto the vision of NOT having what I want, then that is what I am creating.

The trouble is, it's really hard for most of us to hold onto our visions long enough to bring them into reality. And that's because our really big visions are not only from far where we are,
the way towards them does not follow a straight path.

If you remember Ray Lansing shared with us a graph called the Dip of Change
It explained how if we're here and we want to get up here, we can't travel straight from here to there.
Instead, what happens is the road starts to go up, and then it reverses and goes down –
and down – and down – in the exact opposite direction of our goal, before it begins to go up towards it again.
And on that downward journey we humans, more often than not,
totally lose sight of the original goal, and give up on it, and then it can never come into reality.
Unless that vision is clear and bright and real, we will lose sight of it.

That's what the transfiguration was all about.
Jesus and the disciples and their world were here, but they wanted to be there.
The disciples wanted to take the shortest, fastest, easiest route, but Jesus knew that wasn't possible.
To get to resurrected life, he would have to die.
But when he tried to describe the road to them, they didn't get it,
and Jesus knew that unless they could see past the downward turn to the ultimate goal,
they wouldn't have the courage to continue.
Jesus knew that unless they had some image to hold onto that they would never forget, they would never make it.
And so he took them to a place where God could give them such an experience.
The vision was so bright and glorious and dazzling
that it was seared into their souls, imprinted on their minds, engraved upon their hearts.
And no matter what trials or temptations, what discouragements or disillusionings, what changes or challenges
came their way, they could never forget where they were going.

There are lots of things I want for my life.
The smaller dreams and visions are easy to hold onto and work towards.
But the really big ones, the really grand ones, are too big to hold onto and too far away to see
and the path between where I am and where I want to be often seems nonexistent.
And yet I know that the deepest desires of my heart were put there by God
and God wants nothing more than to see those desires fulfilled.
There have been times when I've almost given up, and then God has given me a glimpse of what is to come.
They're like snapshot images of a future that is so certain
that they are seared into my soul, imprinted on my mind and engraved upon my heart.

Whatever the deepest desire in your heart is, know that God planted it there and wants to give it to you.
But to receive that gift, make sure that your mind is on what you want and not it's opposite;
make sure that your feelings surrounding it are the desire of having it, not the dismay of not having it;
make sure you are filled with faith, not fear.
And if you find yourself heading away from that vision, trust that you're simply on the downward part of the trip.
And if you can't trust, if you can't hold onto the vision, then let God know
that you are in need of a transfiguration experience.

God gave the disciples an experience that they could never forget,
an image of light that they could hold onto in the darkness, a promise of what God had in store for them.
God has given me some snapshot images of the future to carry me.
And I know that God will give you what you need to continue your journey.

The way from where we are to where we want to be is not a straight path upwards.
It's a long road that may at times seem to be taking us in the opposite direction from which we want to go.
But that's just the nature of the journey.
Hold fast to the vision and don't give up. Keep walking.
And trust that God will give you whatever you need to keep going –
a snapshot of the future, a transforming experience, a foretaste of the feast to come. **Amen**