

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**The Transfiguration of Our Lord  
Mark 9:2-9, 2 Corinthians 4.3-6**

**14 February 2021  
Salem, Bridgeport**

**“Do Ask – Do Tell”**

You gotta love Peter.

There was nothing boring or nondescript or lukewarm about Peter.

Peter was either right on the mark or he was clueless.

He was either full of faith or full of doubt.

He was either leading the way or getting in the way.

Just think about that time when he saw Jesus walking on water,

and he cries, “Lord, just call me to come to you and I will!”

and immediately he steps out of the boat and starts walking on water!

He’s doing what Jesus is doing!

He’s performing a miracle!

...until he realizes what he’s doing, at which point he begins to sink like, well, like a ROCK! [Get it? ;)]

How utterly embarrassing and humiliating! And in front of all of his friends, no less!

You can just imagine the ribbing he took in the days and weeks following that episode.

And then there was that time when Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

And they answer, “John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the prophets”.

“And who do YOU say that I am?” asks Jesus.

And Peter is the first to answer: “You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!”

Peter has gotten it absolutely, totally, completely, perfectly, 100% right!

For Jesus says, “& on this Petra, this Peter, this Rock, this confession of faith, I will build my church!”

Wow. Talk about nailing it! Peter just got an A+++.

But of course the Messiah was the one who was supposed to restore the Kingdom of Israel  
and overthrow Roman rule.

That had to be what was in Peter’s mind.

He had gotten the words right,

but Jesus goes on to explain that while the words are right, the concept is wrong.

Jesus is not here to restore the Kingdom of Israel on earth.

Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus’ kingdom is the kingdom of God, here and now, the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Jesus starts to teach his disciples this and he explains,

“I am not going to overthrow the Roman government.

In fact I am going to get them so angry that they are going to want to kill me

and I’m not going to fight back. I’m going to let them kill me.

And at this Peter exclaims, “No way! We’re NOT gonna let that happen!”

And Jesus looks at him and says, “Get behind me, Satan!”

He had walked on water and then sank like a stone, and now it was happening all over again.

He had gotten it totally right and then totally wrong.

So why am I talking about Peter when our story is about the Transfiguration?

Because this story about Peter is the setup for what is to come.

In Mark’s gospel story, one of his favorite words is “immediately”.

“Immediately” Jesus got up and did this...

“Immediately” Jesus did this...

“Immediately” this happened....

“Immediately” that happened...

“Immediately”.... “Immediately”.... “Immediately”....

But after Jesus rebukes Peter there is no “immediately”. Instead there are 6 long days.

Think back to when you have had a falling out with a dear friend.

Maybe you’ve said something in the heat of the moment,  
maybe something you really didn’t mean,  
or maybe something that was taken the wrong way,  
and your friend was angry and hurt  
and your relationship is feels broken and you don’t know how to make it right.  
because you can’t go back in and unsay the words.  
You can’t undo the damage that you’ve done.  
You can’t forget, let alone forgive yourself.

I know you all know how that feels. It feels absolutely horrible.

So not only were all the disciples trying to wrap their minds around what Jesus was saying  
about the Savior not being saved or saving, but suffering and dying,  
but here was Peter, still consumed with guilt and shame, feeling like he failed,  
and not knowing how to make things right with Jesus or with the other disciples.

Of course Jesus knew how Peter felt,

understanding that even though Jesus had forgiven Peter, Peter was still trying to forgive himself.

And Jesus knew how all the disciples were feeling about the things he was telling them.

He knew they were confused and upset and distressed and afraid.

And so he takes Peter, James and John up on the mountain

where God allowed them to see Jesus transfigured into the shining, glorious, divine presence,  
and accompanied by Elijah and Moses.

And when Peter sees Jesus right there with Elijah and Moses, Peter knows that his faith has been confirmed.

Others had said that Jesus was perhaps Elijah or one of the prophets,  
but here God was showing Peter that what Peter had said was right:

Jesus wasn’t Elijah and Jesus wasn’t one of the prophets;  
Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, just as Peter had said.

Peter James and John are having a theophany.

They are seeing and hearing and experiencing God.

And it is so grand and glorious that Peter doesn’t want it to end.

He wants his walk on water to continue and he doesn’t want to sink.

He wants that right answer to hang in the air and not to be utterly obliterated by his wrong answer.

He wants this moment with the shining Jesus to last forever.

But it can’t. And it doesn’t need to. Because there will be other theophanies to come.

Now if you read your Bible, you’ll know that theophanies or other experiences of God occur all the time.

There’s the burning bush, the pillar of fire by day and the pillar of fire by night;

there are angels and strangers with messages from God,

and chariots of fire, and visions, and dreams, and a still small voice.

That’s what the Bible is: stories of people encountering and experiencing God.

But these experiences, like every kind of experience in our time-bound human life, are by definition temporary.  
They don’t go on forever.

And they don’t have to because their purpose is to give hope through the remembering and through the sharing

Now I’m assuming that each of you has had some kind of theophany or encounter with or experience of God.

I’m assuming that’s why you come back week after week after week.

I know some of your stories – Steve’s angels for instance – but I don’t know all of your stories.

And I don't know all your stories probably because most of you have grown up Lutheran which means you are likely of northern European descent, and that particular cultural heritage sometimes makes it difficult to talk about spiritual matters.

But here's the thing.

Our theophanies are the most important experiences of our lives,  
the most precious moments.  
the most transformative times.

They are so important and precious and transformative that we want them to last forever, but of course, we can't.

But we CAN & MUST remember them and share them.

For it is in the remembering of these that our hope is renewed in times of doubt.  
And it is the sharing of these that we bring others into deeper relationship with God.

Sometimes I think we stop listening at the point when Jesus says to his disciples, "Don't tell anyone about what you've experienced..." and we sigh with relief and clam up. But what Jesus said was "Don't tell anyone about what you've experienced UNTIL I've been raised from the dead. And THEN Go and tell the entire world!!!"

If I had to pick one reason that mainline Protestantism is dying, it would be this one:

We aren't sharing the amazing things that the all-powerful and all-loving God is doing in our lives! In our reading today from Second Corinthians, Paul writes that people are perishing because they can't see "*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God*". And he goes on to say that God "*has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

If God is real to you, if you know God, if you have encountered God, if you have experienced God, my challenge for you is to tell your story.

This week we begin Lent, and since this entire year past has been about giving up things, maybe instead of giving up something for Lent, you just commit to telling someone about the awesome God you know.

Set a goal for yourself.

Maybe it's to tell one person during the Lenten season.

Maybe it's to tell one person a week.

Or maybe 1 a day.

Tell someone about the awesome God you know

and I promise that when you do, something awesome will happen.

If you don't know who to tell, or you want to practice on someone first, give me a call.

There is nothing I like hearing more than stories about God at work.

As Paul writes in Romans 10.14, "*How can people have faith ...if they have never heard about God? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them?*"

The reason we are here today is because Peter and James and John shared their theophanies, their encounters with God, their experiences of God with others.

And others shared with others who shared with us.

God has built a fire in your heart.

And every time you share the story of that fire, the Holy Spirit, fans the flames and makes the fire stronger. So give thanks for God's presence in your life. And tell someone else so they can give thanks, too. **Amen**