

Pastor Graham Pfeffer Sermon for 2nd March 2025 Transfiguration Sunday

Text Luke 9:28-36 ²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses, and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. ³¹ They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Who enjoys walking tracks that take you to the top of mountains? As you walk there the scenery changes takes on a different perspective as you ascend higher and higher. For me, there is something special about mountain top experiences. From the top of a mountain on a clear day, you can see for miles around.

I also enjoy Spiritual Mountain top experiences. Those times when I experience Jesus presence and overawed by a special spiritual moment. Every time of worship can be a mountain top experience as we experience the glory of Jesus in his word, as we listen to Jesus, as he comes to us in his holy sacraments.

In this gospel reading of Luke telling his account of the transfiguration, there are few things happening. Something happened eight days earlier that led Jesus to take Peter, James and John up a mountain to pray with him. On the mountain the disciples are tired and sleepy, yet they awake to seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah in glorious splendour, while the appearance of Jesus face changed and his clothes as bright as a flash of lightning.

Peter wants to hold onto that glorious moment, so he asks to put up three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Can you imagine camping out Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Being in their presence. What would you talk about around the campfire. Actually, you might not even be able to tell it was night time, with so much light shining from Jesus. We are told that is what it's going to be like in heaven.

But then a cloud comes in and covers all of them. No, it's not a rain cloud to ruin the moment, but it's the cloud of God's presence as he did with Moses and his people after he rescued them from Egypt. A voice comes from the cloud, this is my Son whom I love, listen to him.

The cloud is gone, all they see is Jesus and they head down the mountain to where things aren't going to well for the other disciples. That's interesting to note. Why did Jesus ask Peter, James and John to go pray with him and not the other nine. It's the same in the garden of gethsemane. Is it because of what happened eight days earlier, where upon the disciples returning after being sent out with power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick, Jesus asked, who do people say that I am.

When Jesus asked, who do you say that I am, Peter said, you are the Christ, God's Messiah. But Jesus told them not to say this to anyone, instead he told them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Now we have the advantage of knowing Jesus died for us on the cross to save us from our sins. But for Peter, this is totally wrong. Peter is even recorded rebuking Jesus, to which Jesus replied get behind me Satan. For Peter, the Messiah is not meant to die. The Messiah is meant to come and restore the people of God from the oppression of the Roman authorities.

But Jesus said, he must suffer, be rejected and killed, then goes on to say, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Also, *Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.* ²⁷ *Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.*"

It makes me wonder. When Jesus says, some of you standing here will not taste death before seeing the kingdom of God, has he already got in mind that he will take Peter, James and John to have an experience to see how the kingdom of God is through Jesus, the one whom they are following.

In Mark 10, it is James and John who ask Jesus, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." However, up on that mountain, it's not James and John with Jesus, it is Moses and Elijah. These two great Old Testament figures, the law and the prophets, whose teachings all point to Jesus as Messiah, the saviour. The law and the prophets are now fulfilled in Jesus.

Instead, what is Peter, James and John doing? They are struggling to stay awake, like what will happen to them in the Garden of Gethsemane, and don't comprehend the magnitude of what is happening.

Then comes the all-important lesson from God. To the disciples and to each of us. This is my Son, whom I have chosen, listen to him. Listen to him when he tells you he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Listen to my Son who has called you to follow him.

God also says to us, listen to him. Listen to him so that his teachings challenge you, transform you, and guide your everyday decisions. Let his words go from in your ears where they then penetrate your heart and soul to direct your actions.

Take time out for prayer, spiritual retreat, and listening to the voice of God. Feel transformed through these mountain top moments. Also realize, while you would like to stay in those moments, the reality is, the call to ministry leads us to return to where the hard work of healing and freeing the oppressed is. After all, Jesus' ministry is not transformative and redemptive because of what he did on the mountain, but by what he did when he came back down from that mountain and set his face toward Jerusalem.

That is our hope. Because sometimes ministry isn't going to be easy, and you might wonder, why isn't the ministry we are doing, working. You might wonder if Jesus is away helping someone else have a mountain top experience while you feel as though you're stuck down in the valley, with not much to show for your efforts.

Remember, we are recipients of why Jesus came down from that moment of glory upon that mountain, down to people who need love and compassion. That's each of us. As we read in John 15:13, Greater love has no one than this, than someone to lay down his life for his friends.

Remember what Jesus said to his parents when they found him in the temple. Why did you look for me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

As we listen to Jesus, we soon learn that his business is our business. We listen and we act. We love as he has first loved us. Jesus revealed to his disciples on the mountain the kingdom of God is through Jesus. Moses and Elijah affirmed it, God affirmed it. The bible affirms it. We affirm it through faith and listen to him ourselves. Amen.