


“Get Up and Go”
Sunday, February 26, 2017
Transfiguration Sunday

 **Matthew 17:1-9 (NRSV)**

The Transfiguration

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, *“Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”*

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, *“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”*

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “*Get up and do not be afraid.*”

And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “*Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.*”

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks, be to God.

[MESSAGE]

The church calendar tells us that today is the celebration of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

It is the last Sunday before Lent begins.

A few days earlier, Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer at the hands of the Romans, ultimately giving his life.

From this point forward, the gospels are about this final journey to Jerusalem that ends with the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

It isn't so hard to imagine how the disciples were feeling that day.

Jesus first tells them that he is about to give himself up to death; they are shocked and very worried about what is coming.

Then they see Jesus in all his divine glory on the mountaintop and they want to stay in that place forever, as if to avoid the inevitable sorrow that is waiting for them in Jerusalem.

Sometimes I think we feel much the same way about the season of Lent.

We know what is coming and we really don't want to dwell on the shocking stories that take us to Good Friday.

We would rather hear about the wonderful miracles Jesus performed, the healing stories, and the happy memories.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could just skip right to
Easter Sunday and sing happy songs of joy?

We cannot ignore the harsher images of this story; we
cannot change our Lord's fate.

We know the story so well and we remember it as
we endure our own stories of suffering, loss,
and brokenness.

So, the question is: will we risk the price of
weeping and suffering, celebration and surprise
when life is somehow redeemed?

Will we gain hope from this story today and find
ways to get up from our mundane lives, leave
our fear behind, and go where Christ leads?

Let us pray...Lord, help us to draw hope from your
word this morning. We come to you for strength
and encouragement as we seek to go where you lead
us. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Peter, James, and John go on this hike up the mountain
with Jesus and they must be thinking about all the
possibilities that surround the days to come.

They're probably wishing they could figure out a way to avoid the trip to Jerusalem.

Then they see Jesus transfigured before them and they get the idea that, if they build a safe sanctuary up here, away from the world, they can avoid the heartache to come.

Then God's voice jolts them back to reality and tells them to listen to Jesus; they cannot avoid the world and neither can we.

I think there are times for all of us when we'd just as soon find a safe haven to hide, rather than confront the reality of our lives.

I've seen that moment when two people have just received the worst possible news and the patient reaches out to the healthy companion and assures them that everything will be okay.

We feel that moment when the evening news reports nothing but chaos, and then there's that story about one person's graceful act of healing seen by caring for another person whom the world seems to have forgotten.

“These are the moments when we realize that God is present in suffering and sacrifice, just as God is present in the promise and potential of our lives.”ⁱ

I believe the Transfiguration is that kind of moment for us.

On one side, the Transfiguration is a dramatic confirmation of the divinity of Jesus.

On the other side, this event helps the disciples to develop eyes to see God’s light amid the chaos that is coming.

Through death, loss, fear, and resurrection, to the work of the early church, the disciples face the challenge of living without Jesus’ physical presence in their midst.

We are in the same boat.

Jesus has revealed something of himself to each one of us.

We may have wanted to stay in the glory of that particular moment and remain sheltered by the presence of God in our life.

We may have looked around at the world outside of that precious circle and been afraid to let go of the moment and return to the real world.

The transfiguration anticipates these challenges and invites us to live in *“the light and knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*
(2 Corinthians 4:6)

It is vital that we remember Paul’s words and realize that as we live in the light of Christ, Jesus is made real in the everyday and the ordinary.

C.S. Lewis writes a final word from Aslan in *The Silver Chair*: “Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly. I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind.

And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearance. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.”ⁱⁱ

God comes to each of us in transcendent encounters designed to prepare us to endure the world below. God knows we live in the world of the cross, the world that has the ability to break us.

Yet this world is never beyond God’s redemption.

For some people, these encounters come on the mountaintop in a blinding flash of light.

For most people, they happen in ordinary moments at home, at work, at school, in the neighborhood, or any place where we can make a space for the Holy to be present.

In every case, these moments allow us to glimpse the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and carry that image into the darkness of the world.

Ultimately, the Transfiguration helps us to realize that, while there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from suffering, there is also no way we can shield ourselves from the light of God that floods hope into our darkest moments.

For the disciples, the mountaintop was where God prepared them for a sacred journey; giving them something to hold onto when they returned to the reality of life.

For the citizens of Narnia, Aslan speaks from the mountaintop and reminds them that the air is clear up here, but things are heavier and darker down below.

He cautions them not to let reality confuse their minds and rob them of the signs they have seen; the signs are all that matter as they confront the brokenness of their world.

For us, Jesus offers a glimpse of divine glory to shed light into the darkness of our culture and empower us to rise above the crushing reality.

The moment of transfiguration is that point at which God says to the world and to each one of us that there is nothing we can do to prepare for or stand in the way of joy or sorrow.

We cannot build a shelter to contain God, and we cannot keep God safe.

We also cannot escape the light that God will shine on our way.

We simply cannot escape God, Emmanuel, God with us.

God will find us in our homes, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods.

God will find us when our hearts are broken and when we experience joy.

God will find us when we are running away from God and when we are sitting in what seems certainly to be hell.



What can we take from this story today?

Each one of us has been transfigured by our encounters with Jesus Christ; we have been changed, spiritually transformed.

Each one of us has faced fear and doubt.

Today, Jesus offers us hope and assurance that we can get up and go forward without fear.

We can move past whatever is holding us back.

We can leave behind whatever pain we may be feeling.

Jesus reminds us of our mission:

“Get up, go make disciples.”

Then he gives us encouragement:

“Get up and do not be afraid.”

We need to get up and go down from the mountain into where we can do the most good in a world ruled by darkness and chaos.

Do not be afraid!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

ⁱ Anschutz, Maryetta Madeleine, *FEASTING ON THE WORD*, Y-A, V-4, (Westminster John Knox Press, © 2010), 454.

ⁱⁱ Lewis, C.S., *THE SILVER CHAIR*, (New York, HarperCollins, 1981), 25-26.