

Exodus 24:12-18

The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them." 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 he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Matthew 17:1-9

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."

Grasshopper on the Road: At Evening

In the evening Grasshopper walked slowly along the road. The sun was going down. The world was soft and quiet. Grasshopper heard a loud sound. *ZOOM!* Grasshopper heard another noise. *ZOOOM!*

He saw two dragonflies in the air. "Poor Grasshopper," said the dragonflies. "We are flying fast. You are only walking. That is very sad." "It is not sad," said Grasshopper. "I like to walk."

The dragonflies flew over Grasshopper's head. "We can see so many things from up here," said the dragonflies. "All you can see is that road." "I like this road," said Grasshopper. "And I can see flowers growing along the side of the road." "We are zipping and zooming," said the first dragonfly. "We do not have time to look at flowers."

"I can see leaves moving in the trees," said Grasshopper. "We are looping and spinning," said the second dragonfly. "We do not have time to look at leaves."

"I can see the sunset over the mountains," said Grasshopper. "What sunset? What mountains?" asked the dragonflies. "We are diving and dipping. There is no time to look at sunsets and mountains."

ZOOOOM! The two dragonflies raced across the sky. Soon they were gone. The world was quiet again. The sky became dark. Grasshopper watched the moon rising over the land. He watched the stars come out. He was happy to be walking slowly down the road.

Grasshopper was tired. He lay down in a soft place. He knew that in the morning the road would still be there, taking him on and on to wherever he wanted to go.

Sermon

“So what’s the big deal? Why is Transfiguration Sunday a thing?” This was the question my wife asked this past week. And maybe it is your question this morning as well. We get the importance of Jesus’ birth and baptism, of his entry into Jerusalem and his breaking bread with his disciples. We get why the trial and the cross are significant and the tomb that empty. But what makes this day important?

One thing that makes this significant is the theological location of the story. Placed as the midpoint of Jesus’ ministry, half way between Baptism and Resurrection. This event marks a turning point from what has been to what will be. It is as if we have been on a journey, walking along the road and have encountered three signs along the way, markers sharing the significance of each place. The first sign is that of Jesus’ baptism, announcing the heavenly identity of Jesus, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Before any signs or teachings, before Jesus’ ministry has begun we already are shown his divine identity.

The second sign then is today’s passage. Initially transfiguration seems to be a repeat of the first sign. A divine voice sharing a divine identity. But the timing now is different. This is no longer an announcement of identity, but a validation of ministry. “With all that has occurred, this is still my beloved Son and I am pleased.” But then there is the added line, “Listen to him!” This is more than a command for the moment, but a foretaste of what is to come. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...” The risen Christ is given authority and victory.

As a marker along the road, this second sign asks us to slow down, to take notice and to see this moment as a holy one. And it got me wondering about holy moments in my own life - and in yours. I have been thinking about times where I would want to place a sign along the road and point out the significance of the moment, how it pointed to the past and to the future, how it validated who I am and called me into what was next.

Can you think of a holy moment in your life... While you are thinking about it, let me share some examples. Biblically, we often think of Moses and the burning bush, but we also think of Moses on the mountain in today’s passage, receiving the law and commandments, communing with God. Maybe you have had a burning bush encounter, or a mountaintop experience.

In the new testament we often look at Jesus’ birth, his baptism, and even his death as significant holy moments. Maybe in birth or new life or even in death, you have had a holy moment. You have likely had a number of holy moments, but I would like you to take a moment, and take a pen or pencil from the pews or your pocket, and jot down a name for that holy moment into your bulletin.

One of the things that I appreciate about Transfiguration is that by the very name of the event, our minds are directed toward change. Change is one of the common factors across all holy moments. It is not possible to encounter the holy and not be changed,

see change, and live changed. So I wonder, in your holy moment, what was transfigured? What was changed? And how did that change affect you? Maybe jot a few bullet point notes about change with your holy moment.

Change can be a beautiful thing, shining bright, intense and frightening, confusing and yet transparent. Matthew describes all of these things in Jesus' transfiguration, and I would dare to say that for most of us, we have felt the whole host of these as well.

I said that there were three roadside sign, one for Jesus' baptism, one for his Transfiguration, and the third - the third is for his resurrection. Each sign marking the glory of God, each sign marking God's grace and love. Each sign pointing to life and a culmination of past and present and future in just a moment.

But these holy moments are tricky. They are so wonderful to encounter them, that we, like Peter, never want to let them go. We want to hold on to them, live in them forever. Yet after baptism, Jesus had to walk into the wilderness, and before resurrection he had to encounter death, and after transfiguration he and his disciple had to come down the mountain. There was more work to do, there was more loving, more caring, more serving, and more teaching to do.

Our holy moments are just that, moments. And yet, though we cannot stay in them, we can remember them when the going is tough, and hope for new moments to arise along the road that we walk. And we can give thanks to God for all the moments that we carry with us. Amen