

# They didn't see it coming

God unknown and unsheltered by our poor constructs: open to us the moments when heaven overshadows time and robs us of empty words; in the moment of silence help us to listen to the Chosen One, who goes to die that we might live, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*A Collect the Feast of the Transfiguration, Prayers for an Inclusive Church*

## THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; Luke 9:28-36

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### ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

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#### THE GOSPEL READING: LUKE 9:28-36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

They didn't see it coming.

Peter, James, and John, going up the mountain with Jesus didn't see it coming – what they would encounter in the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah talking to him, the cloud that overshadowed them, the voice... They didn't see their own terror welling up inside them...

their own awkward responses to all of it... there was no way they could see it coming when they woke up that morning.

They thought it was going to be just another day doing what they did those days.

And each of them, Peter, James, and John saw something different, each of them. Each had

his own storyline in his mind, a narrative he was telling about his life, about life itself. Each of them saw Jesus differently, each imagined their companions differently. Each had a different idea of what they were doing: going up the mountain, what would happen there, what they would do next, tomorrow, the next day, for the rest of their lives.

While they were together walking up that mountain with Jesus, they were actually three separate lives flying through space and time, captured by their own patterns of thought – and that thought, through habits of their minds, created little individual realities, none of which were Reality.

Those narratives, those stories may have arisen from their own experiences, their own encounters, they may have been pressed into them by their families, their religious, racial and cultural groups, from the dominant, violent, oppressive Roman Empire culture around them, but in each case the “reality” was a little reality, unreal reality, faux (fake) reality.

And likely, under those little realities was fear, real fear of being human and the limitations, frailties, and death that are part of being human – the death they encountered from day to day in betrayal, abandonment, injustice –

all a constant stream of threat that they experienced in their physical bodies, in the deep, organic, elemental reality of who they were as human organisms – that set them thinking.

That thinking in response to what they viscerally, deeply experienced in their bodies could go lots of directions – into thoughts that were “feelings,” and into thoughts usually called “rational thought,” both of which combined into multiple stories they reinforced among the people around them and the kinds of things they did, or owned, or said, or aspired to, maybe worked for.

And somehow, it “worked” for them. Or if it didn’t really create a livable life for them, at least it was familiar.

And now, step by step, probably to some large extent lost in their thoughts, maybe not even aware of the mountain itself, the animals, the plants, the air, the scents on the air, up they went.

They couldn’t have seen it coming. It would have never occurred to them....

Did they even notice that Jesus was praying?

In any case, there it *all* was, the dazzling light shining in and through Jesus, Moses and Elijah...

Nothing about anything they were seeing fit what had been going

on in their minds...

Fake reality was gone and there they were with the Really Real, with All that Is, with the totality of God.

For Jesus, it was just another day, it seemed. He spoke with Moses and Elijah. He wasn't, like Peter, James and John, cowering in utter terror, shutting down in sleep, struggling to stay awake to a new experience.

Peter offered to build three huts so he could hang on to this experience... but apparently being taken hostage to Peter's story wasn't in the interest of Jesus, Moses or Elijah...

And then there was the cloud. The voice: "listen."

Listen.

For Peter, James and John – and for us – the Transfiguration is a question about how open we are to experiencing reality differently? How open are we to recognizing that the story we are telling ourselves is not THE Story – is not the fullness of Story that is the actual story of each of us and all of us.

Certainly the Transfiguration says God is not about our capturing a sacred or divine presence for our own limited purposes. Instead, it is facing, frightening as it is, the open nature of reality around us, in us, among us. Transfiguration says

that what is going on in our minds is likely not what is happening for us and for others and that what is really happening is possibility, is hope, is present in our bodies and in the physical creation of the world (not primarily ethereal or conceptual), is the fullness of not only what each of us is individually but what each person around us is and what we as a whole humanity are created to be – that this potential isn't waiting to happen, it presently exists in God... whether we see it coming or not, ready or not...

Are we listening?

And yes, Jesus shows it all.

He went down from the mountain into all that brought him to his crucifixion, the painful reality of reality. All of our crucifixions in that crucifixion.

Jesus shows us freedom from our little stories to live in the whole story – truth not as an idea, but as lived reality.

So: the Transfiguration, one unexpected Truth, Crucifixion another, Resurrection, still another.

How do we listen? We need to want to hear, to take time to hear, to listen beyond our storylines, the habits of our minds, to release, let go, forgive our little, fake stories, to stay awake for what goes beyond our ability to understand. Contemplative or

meditation practice will help. Anything that helps us listen to our own lives, to the lives of others, life that is larger than we are will help. Life in community is part of that. Service of others is an opening. Not

necessarily seeing what we don't see coming – but at least recognizing that the unexpected is likely to happen... is, in fact, happening all the time....



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