In the Gospel lesson that we just read from Matthew, Jesus took three of his closest disciples (Peter, James and John) up to the mountain to pray. As they were going up, the disciples noticed that Jesus’s face appeared to be glowing and his clothes became dazzling white. It looked like he was turning into some ghostly figure? Was this the same rabbi that we knew? What was going on here?

Instead of being terrified by this metamorphic event, those disciples were being treated with a Divine revelation right before their eyes, as the Heavenly voice proclaimed ***“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”*** They’ve heard this voice before, when Jesus was being baptized by John.

As you could imagine, these disciples were scratching their heads and became shakenly confused. It was only a few days ago, when Simon Peter declared that Jesus was *“the Messiah, the Son of the living God."[[1]](#footnote-1)* In the midst of all of this confusion, they also noticed there were two other ghostly figures standing beside this “glowing” Jesus. They appeared to be Moses and Elijah.

“***Lord, it is good for us to be here!”*** cried out Peter – the impulsive one. Peter had an idea of capturing the moment and commemorating this “feel good” mountaintop experience by building three dwellings (or booths) for each. One for **Moses**, one for **Elijah**, and one **for Jesus**! Pretty elite company right there, don’t you think?

This Transfiguration event was a **pivotal moment** that bore great theological significance. It was one of those rare moments where **the human meets the divine.** The disciples were there as human eyewitnesses of all of this, with Jesus, as rightfully so, being the mediator (or the bridge) between the human and the Divine.

Chances are, if we were there alongside with those disciples, we would probably have done the same thing as well by treasuring up and salivating these precious moments. Let’s build a monument there to commemorate the occasion. Let’s keep those feel-good moments and put them in a time-capsule and preserve them for as long as we can.

In those days, it was not uncommon to build a shrine or an altar to commemorate a special occasion that took place there. Abraham, Jacob and Moses had all built altars and named mountains to commemorate their special encounters with God. Unfortunately that was not exactly what God had in mind for us.

Instead of building a dwelling or a temple up on the mountain, God wanted us to soak in our mountaintop experience and plant temples and monuments of a different kind down below – the ones that we will treasure in our hearts, transform and inspire the lives of others.

For we are God’s spiritual temples called upon to bear fruits of the Spirit.  **We need to experience our own spiritual metamorphosis as well!** God would be more pleased by the **obedience** and **allegiance of our hearts** on the inside rather than what we plastered on the outside!

Furthermore, the Heavenly voice that was heard also legitimized the divinity of Christ as the Son of God. He was not just another prophet or rabbi, like Moses or Elijah, but He was the One who was sent by the Heavenly Father as the long-awaited Messiah. He was the messenger of the Good News and “agent of God’s voice” as we were commanded to. **“Listen to what He had to say!”** But what does that mean?

The very question that Jesus posed to his disciples prior to this transfiguration event is also being asked of us today. **Do we really know who Jesus is personally? Do we just know “about” him on the outside but not really having a deep relationship on the inside? Are we simply too busy with our lives in the frenzy of this world?**

As one theologian puts it, ***“when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, he did not change from one thing into another the way the objects in Harry Potter did, or the way a caterpillar does in a cocoon into a butterfly. Rather, it was like a light shined on Jesus that showed who he truly was. No longer could his friends pretend he was just one of the guys, or even an ordinary man with a few extraordinary gifts for healing. Now Peter, James, and John could see that Jesus was closer to God than they had fully realized, and more powerful than anyone they had ever known.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***Jesus was the real deal then, as He is to us right now.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | In the Old Testament passage that we read from the book of Exodus, we saw how Moses was also being summoned to the mountaintop in a similar fashion for a little “pow-wow” conversation with the LORD. Throughout history, the mountain has served as a refuge and a retreat for reconnecting with God. It is a place where one could **let go** of one’s feelings and thoughts and **let God** speak to us through personal prayer, active listening and discernment.  Moses ended up spending the next 40 days and 40 nights alone with God up in the mountain. 40 days and 40 nights! That’s a very long time to be alone…but Moses wasn’t alone. God was with him throughout. Moses spent those days intentionally listening to what God had to say and to bring God’s message back to the people. Like Jesus Moses’s face was also glowing reflecting the glory of God. |  |

Moses reconnected with God through this mountaintop experience. It felt good to be in God’s company and be walking on “Cloud 9”. Like those disciples when they were with Jesus high up on the mountain, it was a warm and fuzzy feeling that no one ever wants to leave. However, the mountaintop experience is NOT where God wants us to be. Our mission field is down below where our patience and tolerance towards the people might be tested, just as Moses was.

Like Moses and Jesus’s disciples, God intended us to not build ourselves shrines and temples among ourselves but to go where the people are in order to deliver God’s compassion and message of hope and salvation to others.  **That is God’s mission and our calling. Let us never forget that.** The Holy Spirit re-assured us to be with us through each and every step along the way. As we read in our story today, the disciples were frightened by what they saw. They fell their faces to the ground, perhaps because the glowing upon Jesus was too bright. Jesus came over and touched them. He offered the disciples courage and his peace and comfort.[[3]](#footnote-3) The same way he would offer us today when we are discouraged or in fear.

This coming Wednesday, as you know, the Season of Lent will begin with Ash Wednesday. Over the next 40 days and 40 nights, we are being invited by God to reflect and to examine our spiritual journey. It is not a time for us to get ourselves all caught up with the busyness of life. But instead we are called to hit the “pause” button, to “slow things down”, to de-clutter and to keep it simple while reflecting upon the goodness and the blessings of our God. **When we pray, be silent! Listen to what God** **has to say to us, instead of us telling God what we think or what we want.** As the Psalmist reminds us, ***“Be still, and know that I am God!”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

The season of Lent challenges us that **it is NEVER about us, but it is ALL about God. It really is a humbling experience when we come to experience God’s peace in our lives. Are we prepared and willing to go where the LORD is calling us? What spiritual mountains will the LORD invite us to climb next?**

**“*So who do you say that I am?*”** Jesus asked. Nevermind what other people say, but who do YOU say that I am that might inspire you to love others, the same way that I have loved you? As one theologian puts it, *“it is so much easier to stay in our booths than to let God transfigure us into traveling temples! [[5]](#footnote-5)*

This is the challenge for all of us today…that we must step out of our booths (our comfort zone and our safe space) and to go on a journey by taking a leap of faith out into the wilderness with the Holy Spirit walking alongside with us. We must stay off the temptations of building temporary shines, like Peter tried to do, of holding on to Jesus a little longer and to keep Him to ourselves. We must re-tell God’s stories and share our eyewitness accounts to those who have yet known Christ or have yet heard of the Good News that Christ brings.

As the Apostle Paul reminded us through the early church in Corinth, “*where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.”* [[6]](#footnote-6)

As we journey towards the cross over the next 40 days and 40 nights during this season of Lenten, may our lives be rekindled once again with purpose and mirrored through Christ’s image, as we exemplify and shine forth God’s glory to others. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Matthew 16:16* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Abby Thornton Hailey, http://d365.org/devotions/the-mighty-god-devotion-for-february-25-2014/* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 17:6-7* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Psalm 46:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Brown, Sheri Narrative Lectionary Group Posting 2/21/17* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *2 Corinthians 3:17-4:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)