On this last Sunday before the Season of Lent, the church celebrates this special day known as Transfiguration Sunday. This marks a significant moment in Jesus’s ministry, as God revealed to us who Jesus was and what His earthly mission was all about. It is a day in which we are reminded of both the humanity and the divinity of Christ.

Our Gospel text this morning from Mark also takes us on a mountaintop journey with Jesus and three of his closest disciples - Peter, James and John. Those three elite disciples came face-to-face with what appeared to be the other notable prophets of their faith – Moses and Elijah. Upon reaching the top of the mountain, the disciples noticed Jesus’s outward appearance began to change (or transfigure) into dazzling and glowing white...which was a foretelling sign of one’s imminent death. The disciples had no idea what was happening. Through the clouds, the disciples heard a voice from above declaring, “***This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"[[1]](#footnote-1)***  Furthermore, they also saw two ghostly figures who resembled the prophets Moses and Elijah.

As you would imagine, those three disciples were terrified, amazed and become speechless. They didn’t know what to make of all of this. They appeared to be enjoying this “Cloud 9" experience, while deep inside, they were probably terrified and confused by what was happening. In Matthew’s account of the story, Jesus reportedly had to touch the disciples in order to calm them down and gave them the peace of assurance that he was still there with them, even though his glowing appearance might look different.

But there’s always a twist. Peter, known for his impulsive personality came up with this “bright” idea of building three shrines (or dwellings) - one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah to commemorate this special occasion. Peter wanted to “hang on” this Cloud 9 mountaintop experience a little longer and to commemorate this special occasion, as we humanly best know how. Unfortunately, it appears that the disciples had totally missed the mark again. They didn’t get it. While their eyes were fixed on the human and worldly things, they missed the sign of the heavenly things to come, as Jesus foretold his imminent death and resurrection. **The disciples were short-sighted by their own fear and insecurity.**

Suddenly the images of Moses and Elijah disappeared before their eyes, while only Jesus remained. Jesus warned the disciples not to tell anyone of what they had seen until he himself, the Son of Man, had risen from the dead.[[2]](#footnote-2) It was not time yet. Those disciples must be scratching their heads even more. What was Jesus talking about? Why was Jesus foretelling about his death and that he was going to rise up after his death?

The disappearance of Moses and Elijah into the cloud signified that as great as Moses and Elijah were among the elite prophets, they were still mortals, even though both Moses and Elijah were “taken” into the heaven by God, perhaps it was intended to be that their bodies would never be found, so no one could go and worship them physically. However, before their departures, both Moses and Elijah did pass on their torch (so to speak) to their chosen successors. Moses was succeeded by Aaron and Elijah was succeeded by Elisha, as we read in our Old Testament lesson earlier. Both Aaron and Elisha carried on the legacy to continued God’s mission among the people.

However, what made Jesus different from Moses and Elijah was that Jesus was the immortal, and the others were not. Christ’s work is timeless and his mission is still actively alive today. Certainly **Christ is NOT meant for us to be enshrined into a place where people could come and worship…because Jesus cannot be kept physically in certain place, but instead, Jesus’s ministry and mission are implanted in our hearts. His presence is felt whenever and wherever two or three are gathered in his name. He is here among us right now.**

Despite Peter’s bold recommendation, Jesus wanted us to live out our faith based upon our mountaintop “Cloud 9" experience, however, God does not want us to hang around on the mountain too long, as we might become too comfortable and too complacent with our “mountaintop” experience. God wants us to come down from the mountain where the people are and be the prophetic voice and witness of our faith. **Our ministry frontier is not to be confined to the mountaintop, or bound by the walls around us, but instead down by the Sea of Galilee, out in the wilderness and across the land where the people are - the sick, the lame, the orphan, the widow, the lonely and the friendless alike, as we have been reading in the past couple of weeks.**

God called us not only to **Look UP** to Heaven in prayer on the “mountaintop”, but also to **Look DOWN**....down through the clouds and to **LOOK AROUND** in the valley, so that we may engage in relationships amongst those whom we are being sent.

Come to think of it, many of us in our churches today might also be yearning for our “mountaintop Cloud 9 experiences. We nostalgically think back of those “Golden Days” and wanted to savor those moments as Peter suggested. We’ve built the great temple and enshrined our memory. However, God has called upon us into a new era of being church together, as we are faced with many new forms of challenges of today and the days ahead. **Christ is transforming us every day and shaping us to be agents of his love among his people.** How we do ministry may NOT be the same as it used to be before, yet the mission remains the same. We seek to adopt and adapt what the Spirit may lead and guide us.

Each day God is inviting us to go on a new journey, to explore new valleys and mountaintops. God will continue to stretch our imagination and our faith in trusting the leading of the Spirit…through the valleys and into the wilderness of life.

Over the next 48 days, during this season of Lent, all of us are invited to reflect and to examine our spiritual journey. It all begins with Ash Wednesday which reminds us of who we are…as frail ashes and dusts. We are a tiny speck compared to the greatness of who God is. The voice we hear as the Spirit declared to us “*This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him!*” This was a voice calling for our obedience, not to puff ourselves up but to humbly submit ourselves to the sovereignty of God…like ashes and dusts. As tiny as we are compared to God, God assures us that we are never alone when we are faced with the uncertainty our future and dangers. The Spirit will open the water of fear and lead us across the dry ground, just as what Moses and Elijah experienced.

 The season of Lent is not about what we give up for personal sacrifice (or out of one’s abundance) but rather what we take on and how we may see God at work among us in our world today. **It is NEVER about us**, but **it is ONLY about God.** God has invited us into a period of **discernment and reconnecting our hearts with Him** by filtering out any of our personal thoughts or desires that may hinder or stray our relationship with God.

 **Transfiguration means transforming our lives into the persons whom God intends us to be.** As the Apostle Paul reminded us last week that we are to become all things to all people, while recognizing God’s missional calling through our witnesses of faith.

By the virtue of our own baptism, when we place our trust and our faith in Christ, Christ leads us to greater changes than just our outward appearances. Christ transforms us from within through our own metamorphosis of our hearts, through our repentance and confessions. God reaffirmed our relationship with Him by declaring to us, ***“You are my beloved daughter, my beloved son, whom I am well pleased.”***

When we are being transformed by Christ, we celebrate a new beginning by putting on a new self. No longer do we live for ourselves but whatever we do and whatever we say, we live for Christ. As the Apostle Paul also reminded us that ***if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old has gone, and the new has come.***

Through this “mountaintop Cloud 9" experience, God has commissioned us to run this race that Christ has set out before us with vigor and determination, knowing that the Holy Spirit will lead us and cheer us on along the way. **The work of humanity is temporal and finite, but the mission of God is eternal and everlasting.**

**As we embark on our journey to the cross through this coming Lenten season, may we be the agents of life transformation and transfiguration that give life and hope in this world, through the exemplary grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we bear the glow of Christ and radiate God’s glory in all that we do and in all that we say.**

***Shine, Jesus shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory.
Blaze, Spirit blaze,
Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy.
Send forth Your word,
Lord and let there be light.***

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Matthew 17:5 (NIV)* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Mark 9:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)