

Transformed

February 7, 2016 Luke 9:28-36

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“And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.” The last line of our gospel story today. And can we blame them? What they witnessed wasn’t exactly common-place everyday stuff. But they knew it was something special, something extraordinary; witness Peter’s reaction. “It’s GOOD for us to be here. Let’s build some dwellings. Let’s stay here!” Where? In the glory of God. In the love and light and brilliance of the divine. And can we blame him? Don’t we all want those mountaintop experiences to go on and on, to last forever, to never fade? Could there be any better experience in life than when the veil lifts between the worlds and we are privy, even for just a sparkling moment, to see beyond what we see everyday?

Peter, James and John were a bit luckier than we are. They lived before the Enlightenment, that in too many ways dis-enlightened us. As well, they were the keepers of the stories from the Israelites, stories that told of others and their encounters with the Divine. We heard what happened to Moses when he went up that mountaintop. He “spoke” with God, and then came down shining and glowing and looking nothing like what he did before, his face was shining with such brilliance he had to put a veil over it.

Something I think we often miss in these stories is that the folks that are transformed by the presence of the Holy don’t doubt it. Perhaps they have a hard time grasping what is happening. Perhaps they tell no one because there are not words to wrap around these experiences. But we are not told that Peter, James and John did not believe what they experienced. We don’t hear that the Israelites thought Moses was smoking something funny. It is the same with the mystics of every faith tradition. They struggle to explain the experience; yet they remain firmly rooted in how such encounters transform and encourage them. Like Peter, James and John, it may take them years before they attempt to share their witness.

And if we are honest, while we might not have seen Jesus in his holy glory atop a mountain, our lives contain their own moments when we have glimpsed beyond the ordinary everyday. Moments where we have been overcome, holding our breath lest we lose the magical we are in, longing to pitch our tent and stay in that moment forever. Times when the rising sun illuminated the incredible beauty of the world in stillness and quiet. Or the first time we hold that new baby and wonder at the mystery of it all, wonder at the love that floods over us for this tiny thing we don’t even KNOW yet. When we were ready to throw in the towel, call it quits, turn around in dismay and dejection and someone whispers the most affirming words of love and acceptance we have ever heard. That time we never ever should have been forgiven, and yet instead we were cradled and loved and accepted rather than rejected.

It is those mountaintops of life that let us see through what the Irish call the thin spaces of life. Places where we aren’t quite sure which realm we are in. Places where something in our soul is stirring and connecting, and yet we have absolutely no words for this, no way to share this with anyone else. Someday, when God’s plan for the universe comes full circle, we will live in those places of love and glory at all times. We will indeed pitch out tents on the mountaintop and stay there. But in this in-between time, this time when there is much wrong with the world, when there is too much pain, too much suffering, too many unanswered questions, in this time, I believe one of the greatest gifts of the church is the witness of possibility and hope that we share.

It is not the church’s job to save the world; that is God’s job. The church’s job is to proclaim the hope of God, to encourage those who have lost their way, to call out those places where transformation is happening. The church’s job, our job, is to become reckless fools that reflect the God who throws all

caution to the wind, who uses a poor virgin to change the course of history, who feeds thousands with a few loaves of bread, who welcomes home the prodigal son, who pays all the workers the same wages, no matter how long they worked. We are called to follow with foolish abandon, without fear, without scrutiny, without weighing the pros and cons. We are called to share the abundant life that the Gospel proclaims, so that all who say the world is hopeless, who only see the destitution and agony, who live in realms of the sensible and scarce, will also get a glimpse of divine love. People like the folks on the cover of our bulletin. You could make up all sorts of stories that have landed them literally in this boat. But what is clear is that they are in need, great need. There are too many people like this all around our globe right now; people in desperate need of a bit of hope, a glimpse into a better life. As the church, we have the power to do something about this. Our mission committee is going to speak to you know about one way that we can help transform someone else's world; to proclaim hope tangible.