

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Transfiguration of Our Lord
Matthew 17:1-9
January 24th, 2010

Why are you people here? No, I don't mean, "why are you here in church." I mean, why are you here in Kansas City - in the dead of winter - with all this snow and fog and cold temperatures and gloomy weather? Don't you know people in warmer climates? Can't you get on an airplane or pack up your car and go somewhere more enjoyable than this place in the middle of January (especially this year)? Why are you here?

You might have already asked yourself the same question. You might wish to be somewhere warmer or nicer. You might think to yourself that it wouldn't be that hard to pick up and go somewhere else until this cold weather breaks. But then reality sets in.

This is home. We have responsibilities here. We can't just pick up and go at the drop of a hat. We can't escape the bad weather forever and live in a perceived "utopia" where all is well and the temperature never gets below 70 degrees. Life isn't like that for most of us. Life is never like that for any of us.

This is what I mean... No matter how wonderful somewhere else might seem to be right now, it's never wonderful forever and it's never wonderful in every way. You have heard the expression that the grass is always greener on the other side. That other job would be better - when in reality it will have its own set of problems - just like the job you currently have. That other church will be better. That is, until you realize that there are as many sinners in that other church as there are in this one. That other family will be better, that other mom or dad would be better, that other woman or man would be better... The grass is always greener on the other side. That is, it is greener until you get to the other side and then often times see how green the grass was where you came from. Sound familiar?

Life is drab and routine. Life is commonplace. Where is the excitement? Where is the satisfaction? Where is the good weather? Where is the green grass? Even boys and girls find the day too long with the same pattern week after week. They get up in the morning for a quick breakfast (if they even have breakfast anymore), hurry off to school, come home to look at the TV or video games, make some kind of attempt at homework, and go to bed. Kids who are looking for excitement and thrills often get themselves into mischievous trouble. We, too, are like that. We do not want to be by ourselves. Everyday we want something different and exciting. The "sameness" is boring.

Out of such a life came Peter, James and John. After a hard mountain climb they came to the top, away from the sordid day to day things. There they saw a glory which had taken their breath away. Enthusiastically they claim: "*Lord, it is good to be here! Let us make three tents and stay!*" To camp here on the hilltop would be "out of this world." For sure the grass is greener here. For sure it would be great to live here. It would be much better than where they came from, that's for sure.

The three had come from the valley where they encountered exhausted people - grimly, ugly, leprous people. They saw the devastation of poverty and sickness. They had seen the beggars - the blind and diseased. In that vale of tears they had watched men,

deceitful men cheating, carrying on shady deals, overcharging widows and orphans, lying to and defrauding the shoppers in the markets. It was a horrible and greedy world. The three disciples had gotten away from this sort of life and seen on the top of this mountain a glory without a single distorted view. Therefore, we hear the plea, "Let us stay here and forget the valley!"

I understand. We understand. But hopefully we understand this as well. The solution to the ills of life cannot be found by burying our heads in the sand like an ostrich. We will never find the answer to life's problems by closing our eyes to the misery around us or by seeking hideaways for selfish and esthetic contemplation. We cannot live in the clouds, refusing to face the realities of each day. I'm not saying that if you want to be done with the Kansas City weather, then, you are being selfish. No, I'm saying that we can't hide from the things that cause us the most trouble. We can't be fooled into thinking that the green grass on the other side is going to lead to happiness and the solution to all that causes us grief.

Sure, it's much more enjoyable to climb to a scenic vantage point and behold the beauty of God's creation. I saw on the news this past week a view from a helicopter that was flying over a remote Haitian village. From the sky there was much to see - especially all the people waving at the helicopter as it flew by. What a magnificent sight, it seemed. But waving can mean a couple of different things as you well know. It can mean "Hello" or it can mean, "We need help now." From high above one can't tell - that is until you know - until one has heard - until one is in down in the trenches.

Our mission in life directs us to service and sacrifice - to be in the trenches. Our work includes telling the story of Christ's Gospel that fallen man may look up and hope, finding healing from sin and peace with God through the Cross. That's why we can't stay in here (this church sanctuary) - our reprieve from the world even for just a few moments. That's why we must come down from the mountain and find ourselves back in the midst of the huddled masses of the sick, hungry and deprived. Peter, James and John, and, of course, Jesus, needed to be where they are needed most. The grass may have been greener on that Mount of Transfiguration, but that was no place to live - not for Christians and not for Jesus. Thank God that Jesus does not live on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He lives where He is needed - and much of the time that's not where the grass is green. "It is good, Lord, to be here," say Peter, James and John. For sure it was - but not to stay. Our Jesus was transfigured on that mount and showed all His glory to a few of the disciples. But that transfiguration would be for us. Jesus, you see, transfigures our live by comforting us in our sorrows. He speaks words like this, "*Because I live, you shall live also,*" for the reason that He desires to put you at ease with a promise. God knows our daily life - He knows that sunshine and shadows hug each other. He knows our trials and tribulations and that's why we need the "Good Physician" to be with us where we are and not sitting on the top of a mountain. And because He is not up on that mountain is the very reason why we call Him the Good Physician.

You know the difference between a good physician and a bad physician. A bad physician comes into your room while you are riling in pain and agony and says, "you are going to be alright" and then leaves. A good physician comes into that same room and says, "This is hard and painful and discouraging" and He doesn't leave. Jesus came down the

mountain for that very reason – to be honest with us and to stay with us. He helps us through our trials and temptations. He helps us to carry the heavy cross – not from a perch in heaven – but right with you in your life today – right next to you – right IN you.

So the transfiguration of Jesus and His return to the valley where we are met is for the purpose that we should know and be confident – there is only one who can save. Jesus must come and abide. He must come to Kansas City – in the dead of winter – where the grass is not green and sun doesn't shine. He must come down so that He is able to climb another mountain – Calvary. He comes with outstretched, pierced, and bleeding hands and pleads: “Come. Be not afraid. Come and find healing. Come. I am still God's beloved Son – I am your Savior – and I am with you always.” Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.