

February 10, 2013
Luke 9:28-36

Transfiguration C
Look to Jesus

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I want you to come with me on a journey. You don't need anything except what you came here with. Actually, maybe even less. We're going to go on a mountain climb. Mountain climbing is not something that I would ever see myself doing, but this mountain is one that is going to be quite cool to climb. You can even do this climb, even if you are afraid of heights, like I am. I can tell you though, it will be hard work. Let's go...one rock, then another...and another...oh and yet another...and still more...oh my, a mountainside trail up ahead. Let's take a stop there for a break...I know I am getting a little bit tired. Stretch your muscles; drink some water...only a few hundred more feet to go. Continuing along the journey...we reach the summit...and we look out...we see the beauty. We've made it to the mountaintop. Along the way we've had a friend with us, climbing that mountain with us. You know who this friend is. You know him. Probably not the same way you will when you come down this mountain.

I am one that will give anything for a mountain top experience. I am anticipating one soon. I look back on life and I see all sorts of mountaintop experiences. Mission trips, the National Youth Gathering back in 2001. My cross-cultural immersion trip to Southern California during Seminary. I look back to four unique groups of people from four summers of serving on staffs for outdoor Ministry. I even look back to my many years as a camper. Talk about mountaintop experiences. It was all about Jesus. What a blessings those were. Let me give you a few more...one I don't remember...baptism, then on to the day I confirmed my faith. The day that I received my first call into the Public Ministry. The day I took my ordination vows. The day I renewed those vows right in this very room. All spiritually enlightening times. Mountains that I did not want to come down from.

I probably sounded like Peter on the top of the mountain from our gospel reading, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." Those summers as camp as August approached I knew the inevitable was coming...our family that we grew together was going to be broken apart, the realization would hit me that as a group we would never be fully together on this side of heaven. Those four summers, good-byes were never easy. I hated them...the tears that were shed. Especially that last summer, knowing my time serving in Outdoor Ministry was coming to a close. I was there for the kids. Yes there were some groups that frustrated me, that questioned my being there, but ultimately, I was there out of service to the Lord, to serve those kids, to give them something I had...I gave them Jesus. I didn't want to come down off that mountain. I didn't want to go into the valley. That's where it took us.

Today we focus on our text from Luke, the Transfiguration gospel lesson. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on a mountain climb. They witness him being transfigured before their very eyes. Jesus was being revealed before their very eyes as the true Savior of the World. A voice even came out of heaven, "This is my Son, my chosen One...Listen to him." Mountaintop experience to say the least. Not to mention Moses and Elijah were there with them on the mountain. The Law and the Prophets that bear witness to the Messiah are there. Was it good that all of them were there as Peter says? Absolutely...but can they stay...no.

I like to stay in the comfortable. I don't like change. I don't like it at all. My family of faith...it's a reality in our world. Change happens. Society changes, culture changes. The Chosen One however does not.

Many of you are probably well aware that I am not a morning person. The best place I like to be in the morning is in the comfort and warmth of my own bed, but I know I have to get up and I am able to serve the Lord with my day.

The comforts of life are easy to hang on to...Peter shows us this even when it is a spiritual comfort. However, one has to look at the context...what was happening in the life of these disciples. Earlier in the chapter Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ. Next, Jesus foretells his own death. Then Jesus says..."IF anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me..." Seriously...if I was Peter I would want to stay on top of that mountain. I wouldn't want Jesus to die. I wouldn't want to take up my cross. The shelters for all of them do sound good.

Who really wants to take up a cross daily and deny himself to follow after Jesus? Doesn't sound like much fun does it? We know the rest of the story...a cross...isn't that what Jesus died on. Seriously...I can't do that. I like the comforts of life God. Denying myself, might mean I have to give up what I find most important in my life. It might mean that I can't do that as much. It might mean I have to find new friends. It might mean I have to reorder my priorities. I can't do that. Let me stay up here. I don't want to come down. I don't want to do that hard work. Someone else can do. You know, it's Pastor's job to follow Jesus every day, every hour. Do I have to do that to? No, not me God. If you said, weekly...I might be able to do that...but even that is a stretch...the tournaments, birthday parties, and you know the fun stuff in life that isn't able to be done through the week. Oh wait, if you said, "take up his cross monthly and follow me." Now that I might be able to do...I can find time for you in the month. But for now I am staying where I am. It is a safe place...I'm comfortable...and you know...I don't really wanna change. I don't want to come down this mountain.

Who here thinks like this? Who wants to stay up on your own little mountain, where you think you are in the safe comfort of the Lord? Who wants to stay on the mountain, where you don't have to live your Christian life out there in the world on a daily basis?

That's not what we are called to do. As a church, there are times that I think we are content being in the safety of the mountain. As a body of believers, our tithe is not what

comes first...we have to pay our other bills first. We're content on being small in number...we don't want to do evangelism. Oh and if someone new comes in...what are there ideas? Are they useful? Or do the chairs have to go in the exact same place all the time. My dear fellow redeemed, hear the words from the Father, "This is my Son, my chosen One, Listen to him."

This Mount of Transfiguration that the disciples are on, probably changed their life for a moment...they didn't truly understand everything till Jesus was alive again. My dear family of God...we have the rest of the story. We know what happened after the Transfiguration...we know what happened...Jesus made his journey to another mountain – on top of that mountain where he was placed on a cross, he died. He didn't stay dead...the third day...the first day of the week, Sunday Morning, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He lives for you and for me. And for that we can say Alleluia!

These disciples came down that mountain too...and they carried their crosses...many even faced their own physical crosses of death in the face of Christ. These disciples, Looked to Jesus."

Jesus Christ gives us life. He also gives you something else, a cross to bear. As a Christian you are called to live in devotion to him...in all aspects of your life. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. This coming summer at Camp LuWiSoMo the theme is "Look to Jesus". It's we are called to do...listen to these words from the Epistle to the Hebrews: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

We have a race that is marked out for us...and it involves coming down from those mountaintops and running with endurance, throwing off those things that hinder us and the sin that entangles us - The sin of idolatry, the sin of refusing to take our individual responsibility as a Christian. The only way for us to run this race is with Jesus...so let us fix our eyes on Jesus...the Chosen One...the author and perfecter of our faith. The one who endured the cross, scorning its shame, rose from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

My dear family of God, the time is now to look to Jesus. Follow his command – take up your cross and follow after him.

Now is the time to take another journey...it's time to lace up those hiking boots again...it's time to start the journey down the mountain. The journey into the valley, where we will encounter all sorts of things, but we have Jesus. Jesus is with us. We have the Holy Spirit. He is with us. We have the Triune God with us. This journey will be long, it will be hard, but we have Jesus on our side.

As we go through the Valley the Lord does provide many things in our lives. As I stated I never wanted to come down the mountaintop of my times at camp...but I had to. I thought that I would never have the opportunity to be a part of a camp family in that way again. The Lord provided me with an opportunity. An opportunity to serve our Lord at a Camp through the Board of Directors at LuWiSoMo. It's a challenge, it's a lot of work...but what a joy it is. I'm there for the kids.

You see the Lord will provide for us things to do as we are in the valley. We will yes come to another mountain and then we'll have to come down it again...but one day, we will be able to go ascend another mountain and stay...we will be able to have shelters along with Jesus. That is Mt. Zion...the everlasting mountain that we all wait for. Until that day...we go through life, serving our God...sharing with all people, Jesus! Remember Jesus is the one that went and gave his life on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. He is the one that provides you with his good gifts...specially his gifts of the body and blood of our Lord where we get a small foretaste of the feast that is to come. This is a place that we can come for a mountaintop experience with our Lord, but yet we come down that mountaintop and continue carrying our crosses. So Let us look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith! In Jesus Name! Alleluia! Amen!

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, our Transfigured King. Amen.