

Open the eyes of our hearts Lord, we want to see your glory. Amen

When I was young, I spent nearly a month every Summer at Camp Washington in Lakeside, CT. It's the location of the camp and conference center for the Episcopal Diocese of CT. Without exaggeration, it was the best time of my life in those years, especially during high school. In fact, I think I've never really outgrown my love of singing around campfires or singing anywhere for that matter. It was the 1970's, a time of guitars in worship services, folk masses and fervent teenaged expressions of faith set free from "regular church" ways of behaving. For my young self, these were times where the space between my world and the place where God dwelt felt particularly "thin".

I had another such time here at All Saints a few weeks ago. It took place during communion. There were three infants right in a row at the altar rail. As I laid my hand on each of their sweet heads in blessing, my heart filled with such joy. I turned to Arthur, who was standing behind me holding the cup, and said, "I love my job!" I truly do! I love the fullness that God has placed in my life here at All Saints.

Have you ever been privy to a "thin space" time, where God may have felt especially close to you? A place, a moment, where Spirit seemed more real, more....well more "right there"? Take a moment, close your eyes, can you recall it? There is such power in these times of knowing God's presence is close. Perhaps we might even call them mountaintop moments.

On this last Sunday of the season of Epiphany, Jesus climbs a mountain to pray, and takes with him John and James and Peter. Now, this takes place just eight days after the time when Peter declares Jesus is the Messiah of God, and Jesus shocks his disciples, telling them he will undergo suffering, be killed and then raised from the dead. Jesus continues to surprise and confound them at each and every turn. The ways they see him, the ways in which he reveals himself to them are ever changing.

I wonder, what did they talk about on the journey up to the summit? Did they walk in silence? Think about that period of awkward time that often occurs after a difficult conversation. It's hard to believe they were not in some kind of internal turmoil over his announcement. Did Peter and the two brothers find the courage to ask their teacher and friend to help them understand his shocking revelation to them? I mean, we don't know; the text does not tell us. Either way, the disciples had to have been feeling some unease around Jesus right now. If he is the Messiah, then how can he talk of persecution and death and as pathway toward God Kingdom on earth?

So, there they are, trudging up the mountain. Peter, James and John could never have anticipated what they would find there, especially since they know better than to predict what will happen when Jesus is in charge. And perhaps it was best they did not know what was coming. I mean, how could you

possibly prepare for this? I mean, this scene something right out of a sci-fi movie. They must have thought what they were witnessing was a dream, as they roused from their half-sleep states.

They witness Jesus, robed in dazzling light, and the glory of God was revealed in the changing visage of Jesus' face. And there are Moses and Elijah in deep conversation with him! Can you imagine it?

Up until this very moment, even with all they have heard Jesus say and seen him do, they were still reticent to really go all the way with Him, to really believe. But, there is no question now. Jesus is the One. Years later, Peter would write about this moment, naming this mountaintop experience as the three disciples' true Epiphany. *"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we have been eyewitnesses of his majesty."* (2 Peter 1:16)

Now, they see him very differently. Peter sees him differently. They have known the very human Jesus. This is Jesus, revealed now to them, fully divine.

Peter moves into action. I have to say that I understand Peter. Let's hold on to the moment. Freeze it. Keep it safe and pristine. It is his way of trying to control the event and somehow manage the discomfort of having God so close and not quite knowing what to do about it. (? Cheers story- Rebecca, Bill Medley) The Voice from the cloud brings us to our senses. *Stop talking...stay still... "Listen to my son." This is now what you are to do. Listen and follow.*

What does this mean? What does our knowing God is right in our midst, shining into our very being, mean for our lives? What do we do now that the moment when we are moved in such sudden and unexpected ways is over? The simple answer is, we go back down the mountain with Jesus.

You know, the hardest part about loving summer camp was having to leave. It was absolutely heart wrenching to say goodbye to friends! My poor mother! She had to put up with me whining and moaning for days after I got home. What do you mean I have to do laundry and clean my room? Don't you know how miserable I am. I can just hear my teenage self, *"I hate it here."*

Mountaintop experiences don't last, even for Jesus. It is just the next day, the very next day, that he encounters a crowd of people. From that crowd there is a man, a desperate man seeking healing for his son. The unclean spirit afflicting the boy has been resistant to the efforts of Jesus' disciples to cast it out and heal the child.

The frustrated response Jesus directs at the disciples is pretty unsettling. I certainly won't compare his reaction with my whiny responses to my mother, but Jesus really does not get much time to transition from the mountaintop to deep in the valley.

And eventually we come to more level ground again. Jesus heals the boy and gives him back into the loving arms of his father. And there, far from the mountaintop, the greatness of God shone before all once again.

I wonder....was Jesus' purpose in bringing his companions with him up the mountain to witness his transfiguration or to be transfigured themselves? I imagine it is a both/and kind of thing. God draws us close to the light, close to see Christ's glory, that, being in that presence we might carry some portion away with us. It is in these moments that others can see and experience God's love in us.

I am thinking about Peter and James and John, and all of those, including us, that follow Jesus toward the cross in this next season of our lives as the Body of Christ. God calls to us from out of our busyness to listen to and to follow. It is a call to more than giving up or taking on, but to be spiritually transfigured, being fully present to all that we choose to do. The disciples were given a mountaintop on which to come to attention, witness, and be forever changed by the light of the One that has come. When our times in the valley present themselves, it could be easy for us to become discouraged. Someone once said, *"Never doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light,"* Those moments of feeling the Holy One close by to us provide a glimpse of heaven. It is a gift that prepares us for the valleys, the ups and downs of living life on life's terms..... life on God's terms.

I love to come into this building during the week when it is quiet. For me it is one of those thin spaces. Depending on the time of day, the light enters through these windows in all manner of configurations, some muted, some brilliant. I believe this is the way that the light of Christ comes through us, each in our own way. It takes the very distinctive creations that we all are and transfigures us into windows where God's grace might shine through. So, let us draw near on this day and carry out with us some of that light to warm us and those we are near in these coming days of Lent.

May we feel and know that God is with us in the extraordinary moments and in the ordinary times of our lives. And may we bring forth in praise...one more Alleluia.