

Last Epiphany

February 23, 2020

Rev Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Exodus 24:12-18

Moses went up to Sinai, covered by a cloud, the presence of God.

2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter heard and saw the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus was transfigured.

I would like you to think about the mountaintop experiences of your life. I remember a few years ago, a day in the middle of the week, Ruth and I decided to take off to Carmel for the day. We took our dog so we wouldn't have to worry about getting home at a certain time. We went to the beach just south of Carmel beach, where families and dogs walk the beach. The weather was awesome, the fog was rolled back so we could see 17 Mile Drive to the north; the temperature was just a bit cool; and people kept stopping us to talk about dogs and weather and how peaceful the day was. **We wanted to freeze that instant in time.**

I made my Cursillo weekend in 1974 in Erie, Pennsylvania. Before that weekend I attended church pretty regularly, and loved the liturgy we use in the Episcopal Church, but not only did I NOT have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I didn't even know that you COULD HAVE a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What I found on that weekend was a community of people who shared an amazing capacity to love, to support each other, and to have caring concern for each other. This was nothing like the environment in my engineering work, where I had to constantly protect myself against other people competing for the next job promotion. In that weekend I found a framework for life that placed the highest priority on each person growing in our relationship with God. **I wanted to freeze that weekend in time.**

God said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain. I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandments". Now how long should that take? This was a Phone Order pickup project. Walk up the mountain, get some stones, and walk back down. But when Moses went on the mountain, THE cloud covered the mountain. THE cloud was the Shekinah of God; the presence of God; the same Shekinah that was in the pillar of cloud by day and flame by night in the desert. Moses stayed on that mountain for forty days. I think Moses was there for forty days because He didn't want to leave that experience of closeness to God. **He wanted to freeze that experience in time.**

Jesus invited Peter and James and John to come with him to pray on a mountain. Jesus was transfigured. Peter's response was, "let's build a shrine to capture what happened here". **He wanted to freeze the moment in time.**

Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' divinity revealed. People have tried for 2,000 years to understand the concept of Jesus being both fully human and fully divine. The transfiguration was an experience of Jesus' holiness shining through his humanness. Jesus' Godly side transformed his human side.

That is what discipleship is about for you and me. That is what it means to become Christ-like. One of God's purposes in our life is for you and me to expect transfiguration moments in our lives; where God living in us breaks through our humanness, and reveals what God created us to be.

The mountain top experiences of our life are wonderful moments that stay in our memories, and keep us going long after they happen. But they are meant to be fueling stops, not life long escapes from reality. Our mountain top experiences fulfill God's purpose IF we use them like Jesus did; when he left the mountain and healed the demon-possessed boy; and then he set his sights on Jerusalem. After seeing glimpses of God in our life, our job is not to build a shrine, but to use what we've seen and felt and learned: to be changed.

Through our mountain top experiences we get to know more about our God. Through these experiences we are continually being transfigured from what we had once been - to what God calls us to be. Changed from the inside – out.

>> Story of God's big stride; and using our own mountain-top experiences to stay on track in between the footsteps. (from Linda T in SJ; health, family turmoil)

We have been looking throughout Epiphany for the manifestation, the making known, of God in the world.

God is made known in those life experiences that we want to build a shrine about: an escape weekend; some ahaa moment in our faith journey; an unexplainable healing; the breathtaking grandeur of Yosemite, or SF Bay, or the Pacific coastline. The mountain-top experiences of our life are God's gift to us, to carry us through the times in-between;

and to transfigure us – not on the surface, but from the inside out
– to be his beloved children.

Amen.