

Transfiguration Sunday – Year C

Luke 9:28-36

ENJOY THE MOUNTAINTOP – BUT DON'T FORGET THE VALLEY

We've all had them. Those times when we felt like we were on top of the world. Really happy, confident that we knew all the answers, could solve any problem that came up. Or times when we felt that we were really close to God, really in tune with God's plan for our lives. In those moments we have been excited and alive, and it seemed that everything was right with the world.

Those special moments come at different times for different people. Perhaps yours came at some exciting event in your life: graduation from high school or university. Baptism of a child. Birth of a child. A first date with someone you thought to be really special. Your first job. Your wedding day. Even your first successful hunting or fishing experience. Those special moments of life can come at any time and can relate to any circumstance – depending on you.

We call these special times "mountaintop experiences." And oh how we hate to have to come down off that mountain. We want to hang on to those moments as long as we can. "Let's just stay here and let the rest of the world go by." But we can't. We can't freeze a moment in time because that would shut off the possibility and potential of the next moment.

In today's gospel reading Luke tells his story of the Transfiguration. The same story, with some minor variations, is also told by Matthew and Mark in their gospels. It tells about one of those special moments that I've been talking about. One of those mountaintop experiences of life that can somehow defy adequate description and challenge us to stretch our concept of reality to the point that we end up asking, "Did this really happen?" This is a mystery that lies just beyond the reality of everyday life.

But, as Ron Pumphrey would say, "Now hear this!" Now hear this: Jesus quickly led the three disciples down off that mountaintop – even though Peter wanted to pitch a tent and stay there. Jesus led them back to the daily routine of everyday life. Back to the care and the worries. Back to the heart attacks and the cancer and the strokes. Back to the poor and the

hungry and the sin and the devastation of a real world. Back to the reality of life in the valley. Enjoy the mountaintop but don't forget the valley.

Perhaps you have heard the story about a young minister who had just moved to a new church. When he moved into the Manse he noticed that the grass had grown really high and no one had bothered to cut it. So he called the Chair of the property Committee and asked her where he could find the lawn mower. He said, "I'm young and full of energy and I would enjoy spending an hour or two cutting the grass." But the Chair said, "I appreciate your offer, but unfortunately we don't have a lawn mower."

A couple days later the minister noticed a young man going down the road pushing a lawn mower. So he ran out to where the young man was and asked him if he was looking for a job. The young man said, "Yes, I am." It turned out that this young fellow was going around the neighborhood with his lawn mower trying to earn enough money to buy a bicycle. The minister said, "Look, I've got a ten speed bike that I never use anymore. What do you say we make a trade. I will trade you the bike for the lawn mower."

They concluded the deal. The young fellow took off on the bike, and the minister got ready to mow the lawn. The boy rode around the block a few times and came back to find the minister still pulling on the cord as he tried to get the mower started. The boy stopped and said to the minister, "I'm sorry, reverend, but I forgot to tell you, that mower won't start unless you swear on it. You have to use real bad language to get that thing started."

The minister looked at the young man and said, "I've been a minister for so long that I've forgotten how to swear or use bad language." The young man grinned and said, "That's ok, reverend, just keep pulling on the cord in this hot sun and pretty soon it will all come back to you!"

The point is this: We should not stay so long on the mountaintop that we forget what it is like to be in the crowd.

But Peter needed the mountaintop. We all do. It was there that Peter learned to listen to Jesus. We have all had those special moments or we wouldn't be here. Moments when we needed to listen to that "still, small voice." Peter did not set out to climb the mountain to look for God. But God found Peter on the mountaintop. We don't find God. God finds us. And, when God is ready God reveals to us God's plan for our life. And every plan

is different. We need to listen. We need to learn. We all need to experience the mountaintop. But don't forget the valley. Thanks be to God. Amen.