

## Transfigured and Touched

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

*After being drawn into an incredible divine experience, Jesus touches the disciples. Likewise, He commands them not to tell anyone about the vision until after the resurrection. Yet when they remember, they'll know Jesus touched them. A new reality of God revealed in the divine transcendence but also revealed in human touch.*

1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." 8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Those of us who live and play in Colorado understand how quickly weather can change in the mountains. One minute the sun is shining and in the next ten minutes, the clouds have come, the temperature drops and it can be raining. At 14,000 feet with luminous clouds, narrow passes and limited sight lines, all this makes for joy filled days yet also hair raising moments if caught off guard.

Jesus leads Peter, James and John up Mount Tabor. Even though it was a hill, they might as well have been in Rocky Mountain National Park! One minute earth's sun is shining and the next minute, well...God's Son is Shining. A cloud envelops the group and there stands Jesus transfigured. His clothes glistening like sun on snow flakes and His face...one could hardly look at it without sunglasses!

Remember Biblically, when events take place on mountain tops, beware! Divine encounters happen regularly at 14,000 feet up. First century Jews, upon hearing this story, understood the divine drama being played out when the paths of Jesus, Moses and Elijah crossed. Historically, intellectually and scripturally they would

have immediately grasped a context we might miss. 'Six days after' took them directly back to Moses up on Mount Sinai pleading for God's mercy after the Israelites had broken the Ten Commandments. While there, God began to speak from a cloud. Moses represented the Law, and Elijah the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. Both of these men were prophesied to return at the time of the Messiah's coming. Moses and Elijah's presence would have given credence to who Jesus was, His ministry and His eventual death.

Just as we don't have any control over quick weather changes in our mountains, so too, humans don't have any control over when God chooses to show up. Having these three great giants of the faith all appear at once was enough to make any faithful Jew quiver in their hiking boots.

We know the story. As Peter, James and John watch from a distance, Jesus looks completely different than He ever has before. His countenance has changed. His clothes are glowing. Elijah the great prophet, is chatting Jesus up. Moses who led the Israelites from slavery to freedom...his presence represents God's covenant with the people. Truth is God is being revealed in a new ways. Jesus, standing alongside these two, He is greater than all the law or the prophets before Him.

Then just as Peter is asking if they can all stick around awhile, a voice comes descending from on high. The cloud begins speaking. "This one, this One, My beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

Have you ever been so scared you fell on your feet? Boom! Faces to the ground. Trembling with fear. What you can't see just might not hurt you, so don't look up...that kind of fear!

Who wouldn't? God moments can scare the daylights out of us. One minute everything seems normal and then the next minute, we hear a voice that we know is not our own. Or we see a vision while we're praying. Or God's presence fills our bodies with warmth. We fall to our knees. Or it's a silence that roars. God moments are the in breaking of a new dawn. Experiencing the divine is not an everyday occurrence.

Then...Jesus touches them. He touches them. God fully divine just seconds ago - His outward appearance so altered that they hardly knew who they were looking at; now this same God, in the Jesus they did recognize....touched them.

Young Nicki's parents had tucked her into bed almost an hour ago. But the lightning kept flashing in her windows and the loud claps of thunder were making her more and more afraid. From underneath the covers, she began to cry and her

sobs got louder and louder. Soon her Dad came into the room and pulled Nicki up so that she sat next to him. He wrapped his arm around her and slowly she quieted down enough to nuzzle her head on his shoulder.

“Were you worried, sweet heart?”

“I was so much! I kept praying to God over and over, but the thunder wouldn’t stop!”

“It’s ok, now. I’ve got you, Nicki.”

“Yes, I know. I can feel you. You’re like God with skin on.”

Who of us hasn’t needed a God with skin on? The disciples did! After their terrifying mountain top experience, the very human Jesus knew what would help. Human touch.

It’s human touch that can bring us back to the present moment when we’re worried. It’s human touch that can stop a pounding heart or slow a racing mind. God, in God’s infinite wisdom appreciates that we can’t handle too much of God’s self-revelation. Because God is beyond our comprehension, beyond all we can ever fathom; God realizes our small finite brains can only manage teaspoon doses of the infinite Almighty.

Even after standing with the heros of the past, Jesus is not so divine and mysterious that there is no absence of humanity. He is the incarnate one – Jesus with real flesh and blood. He is God with skin on. Jesus that knows fear like His own disciples did.

So Jesus touched them. Jesus limited His power and touched them in body, mind and spirit. He touched their skin, their hearts, their faith too. That touch brought them into the present, halted their fear and gave Peter, James and John courage to rise again. They thought it was just a hike. No, this was a new reality of God; divine and human.

But then Jesus says a very strange thing. “Don’t tell anyone about this vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”

Don’t tell?! That doesn’t fly very well in this day and age. In the media we have instant, breaking news. We know what occurs half way around the globe before its even hit local newspapers. There are some who might argue that most of the news isn’t news. It’s just regurgitated, repeated details dissected into smaller and smaller parts! Don’t tell? Seriously.

No. Seriously. Jesus said, "Don't tell."

Human touch can comfort and bring us back to reality. It's reassuring to have another human being to share powerful experiences with. Yet...there are times, when an experience of the divine ought not be talked about. God created in Jesus a new way of relating to the Almighty. That took people time to sort through. Minds, bodies and spirits needed space to absorb a God who came so close.

One day when Zechariah was on duty in the Temple, the angel Gabriel told him Sarah would bear a son. Sarah had been barren for many years so Zechariah didn't believe Gabriel. Thus Gabriel made him mute until after son John was born. God wouldn't let him tell. God purposely gave Zechariah time to ponder the divine encounter.

Or take Mary for instance...after Jesus was born, the shepherds found Mary and Joseph in the stable. They spilled out the news that angels had been singing. They talked about being given instructions to come and find the newborn King. But Mary... she 'pondered all these things in her heart.' She turned them over and over in her spirit and imagination and her intuition. Mary didn't tell, she pondered.

Like yeast which makes bread rise over hours, holy encounters require time to be understood. God grants a brief moment, a transformational moment to give us a glimpse of who God is.

But then, in order to comprehend more than we can comprehend, we need to ponder. To wonder. To pray and speak with God who can show us the meaning. There doesn't need to be a public breaking down of each and every detail. Because certain experiences are simply cheapened when spoken aloud; not everything needs to be shared. God will help us ponder.

The Good News of the transfiguration this day is that *God reveals Godself to us and then touches us in heart, mind and spirit.*

As we enter into Lent, let us take time to ponder the life-altering experiences we've had with God. Hold them in prayer. Ponder. Wonder! Thank God for touching us that our faith lives can be changed in a minute.

Amen!