

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
February 26/27, 2022  
Year C: Transfiguration: Luke 9:28-36  
Rev. Debra Abbott

***Luke 9:28-36***

*<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

*<sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.*

*<sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.*

Today we are going to start at the end of our story from the gospel of Luke instead of the beginning.

This story ends in silence. The disciples were speechless. To be specific, Peter and John and James were speechless.

Now, usually when I picture the disciples, I imagine them as a noisy group of guys all talking over each other, discussing or arguing about all kinds of things.

But today they are left speechless. How did that happen?

It begins with Peter and John and James climbing up a mountain with Jesus. When they all stopped the disciples were tired, practically falling asleep. Until, that is, the moment that Jesus changed. All of the sudden he was shining brightly before them. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to Jesus. And then God's voice announced, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

Today the disciples experience Jesus in a way they haven't before, radiant and glorious. They see Moses and Elijah, that was a first! And then God says "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" And they are speechless.

Now maybe that's because they were listening as God instructed them to do. But I suspect it was because they didn't know what to say or think or feel or do. Either way, they were speechless.

We can imagine that they thought about this incredible mountaintop experience for a long time before they shared it with others or understood what they saw and heard. They needed time for contemplation and silence and reflection.

Have you ever found yourself on a mountaintop with a few good friends? Maybe spent a few minutes or hours or even days enjoying a beautiful view, a sunset, flora and fauna all around you?

The experiences I've had on mountaintops that I remember best have been with other people. Sometimes family, sometimes friends. And they can be powerful experiences.

I also know that there are many people who like hiking up a mountain alone or enjoy the solitude of camping out by themselves. Those are life-giving and life-changing experiences as well.

We know that Jesus did both. He spent time on mountaintops and quiet places alone. And he also made his way up mountaintops with other people.

Today he goes up a mountain with Peter and John and James. And together they experience something incredible.

But it wasn't only Jesus and Peter and John and James on that mountaintop.

Jesus has a pretty amazing conversation with Moses and Elijah. The gospel of Luke tells us that “they appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

That word “departure” that we just heard used there is “exodus” in Greek. Moses and Elijah and Jesus were speaking of his *exodus*, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Exodus is central to the story of Moses and the Israelites. They were enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt and then God sent Moses to deliver God’s message of freedom. But Pharaoh did not release the Israelites and so God sent ten plagues. And after the last plague, Pharaoh let the people go. Their departure from Egypt to freedom and the Promised Land is known as the Exodus.

So Jesus has a conversation with Moses and Elijah about his exodus that will happen in Jerusalem. Is this an exodus similar to the exodus Moses experienced? Is it a journey to freedom?

Before they go up the mountain Jesus shared with his disciples that he would suffer and be killed and rise again. And this is what Jesus was talking about with Moses and Elijah.

If we look back a few verses before our story today we find that Jesus asked his disciples in Luke 9:18, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” They answered, “John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.” He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

This journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die and rise again that Jesus told his disciples about was his exodus. It was a journey to freedom and new life. Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection on the third day means freedom and new life. By his death and resurrection Jesus frees us from sin and from death that we might truly live and live forever.

As the season of Epiphany comes to an end on this Transfiguration Sunday we see Jesus, the Messiah, in a dazzling display on a mountaintop. We hear again God’s voice claiming Jesus as God’s Son, the Chosen. Jesus is revealed to us. He shines brightly for us all to see and know.

In this season of Epiphany we have heard again and again stories that reveal who Jesus is. We have heard the good news of Jesus living in our midst and in our world bringing love and life and freedom.

After Jesus' transfiguration the disciples came down the mountain and followed Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross and the empty tomb.

Now that Jesus has been revealed to us, we too are called to follow him. We are invited to take time to see his light and listen to him. We too will follow him and maybe find ourselves speechless as his disciples were.

In just a few days we will, in effect, come down from the mountain of the Transfiguration and walk right into Ash Wednesday where we are reminded that we are human. We will begin our Lenten journey walking with Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross. It will be a journey to the place Jesus told his disciples he would have to go. To his exodus.

We need this exodus. We need the freedom Jesus brings. Freedom from uncertainty, suffering, failures, worries and war.

This week as we have watched and listened and read about people fighting for their freedom in Ukraine perhaps you have found yourself worried for friends or family or strangers living in that place or nearby. Maybe you have been praying for peace. Maybe you have given thanks if you are fortunate enough to have a safe place to live and food to eat.

We know pain and suffering and fear today. Just as we also know joy and laughter and peace. Wherever you find yourself in this moment, Jesus meets you where you are and promises freedom from all that weighs us down, all that hurts us, all that separates us from God.

That doesn't mean that we won't know suffering. It does mean that Jesus is right there with us every day showing us the way to live as people who have been freed.

How will you live this day as a freed and loved follower of Jesus? Because you are free. Free to follow Jesus. Free to share the gifts you have been given. Free to forgive. Free to be kind. Free to love. Free to be amazed.

Blessings on your journey this week up and down all the mountains. And may you know freedom by the love of Jesus. Amen.