

Sermon February 15, 2026

A Prayer for Transfiguration and Peace

Radiant Creator,

We stand with the disciples on the mountaintop, awestruck by the light of liberation shining through Jesus, revealing the divine, inherent worth in all. Yet, we confess we often prefer to stay in the comfort of this vision, ignoring the shadows of conflict and injustice that cover our world.

On this Transfiguration Sunday, we pray for the transformative peace that surpasses all understanding.

- **Transform our fear into courage:** When we are overwhelmed by the darkness of war and inequality, help us to be instruments of your peace, spreading love and compassion.
- **Illuminate our actions:** As Jesus descended from the mountain to serve, move us from the sanctuary into the community to stand against oppression and work for justice.
- **Open our hearts:** Let the light of this day shatter our prejudices and divisions, allowing us to see your glory in our neighbors—especially the marginalized, the vulnerable, and the enemy.

We pray for a world where swords are hammered into plowshares and peace reigns.

Transform us, O God, that we may reflect your divine, inclusive love in all we do.

Amen.

Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 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.' 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!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched

them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

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.'

The Bright Cloud of Unknowing

When Meg was 11, she and I went on vacation together. For part of our trip, we met up with my brother for the OZ Convention held at an old, closed amusement park in North Carolina called "The Land of Oz". We stayed in a villa on the peak of the tallest mountain on the East Coast. It was beautiful, but a little scary to get there. The road up the mountain was narrow and curvy. There wasn't much of a barrier on the side of the road, so one wrong turn and it was a long drop down! On the morning when we left, it was raining. As we packed up the car, the fog was so thick that you couldn't see a foot in front of you. We were so high up, we were literally standing in the middle of a rain cloud. As the fog swirled around us, we began the long, scary drive down the mountain, out of the clouds and back to the day to day expectations of our lives.

Today we heard the story of that time long ago, when Moses climbed up the mountain. A cloud settled down on the peak, hiding from the people all that happened. For 40 days and 40 nights, Moses stayed up there, shrouded in fog... in the presence of the glory of God. For 40 days and 40 nights, the people quaked with fear. What if Moses never returned? What if falls off the mountain as he stumbles through the fog? What if he is struck by lightning? What if he is so happy in the presence of God that he never wants to leave? What if he forgets the people he led out of Egypt? What will happen to us if we are left alone in the wilderness?

But, of course, on the 41st day, Moses returned, bearing the gift of the law.

Jesus climbed the mountain too. He took with him his closest disciples and they went higher and higher, looking for a quiet place to pray, far away from the crowds... looking for peace and quiet. But once they make it to the top, prayer soon turns to sleep. The disciples are exhausted and can barely keep their eyes open. But before sleep overtakes them, something amazing happens. They are startled awake by a sudden flash of radiance and the disciples behold the glory of God. And then, suddenly Jesus is not alone. Surrounded by the radiance, he joined by Moses and Elijah...two of Israel's greatest heroes. Moses, who brought the Law down that mountain and led the people to their land and Elijah, the greatest prophet of all who ascended into heaven in a chariot.

Both Moses and Elijah were called to lead God's people in a new direction; Peter, James and John realize that Jesus shares this prophetic call with them.

In the presence of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, the disciples catch a glimpse of life in the reign of God to come.

Can you imagine what it would be like to be up there, with Peter and his friends? Peter wants to hold on to this awe-inspiring moment forever: "Let us build three tents, one for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, and stay here." He wants to hold on to this moment and never let it go.

But of course, that was impossible. As suddenly as Moses and Elijah appeared, they disappeared. It was time to climb back down, out of the clouds, and resume their ministry... to return to the pushy crowds demanding their attention.

But they were changed by that mountaintop experience. They were able to see the world with new eyes. They received a better understanding of God's plan: "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased," God calls out, "Listen to him!" All the healings and cures and miracles were pieces of one beautiful puzzle. A puzzle when completed shows us the reign of God.

They were ready to take on the demands and risks of discipleship. *Jesus wasn't the only one changed on the mountain. The disciples were transfigured too.*

If we want to know who Jesus is and what Jesus needs from us, we must also be willing to be transfigured... to be changed... melted and molded and prepared for the demands and risks of discipleship.

We don't have to go to the top of a mountain to find Jesus and experience the joy of God's presence. We only need to be open to the possibility of experiencing it right here, right now.

God's revelation comes when we least expect it. We cannot control or predict when these moments of revelation will occur. All we can do is prepare our hearts and be ready... to listen and to respond.

When God comes to us... when we open our eyes and see dazzling radiance or fog or smoke or fire... we are moved to a new understanding of faith. We will see the world with new eyes. We will see a glimpse of those who came before us and prepared the way – Moses and Elijah and Peter and John. We will hear God's words of blessing and Jesus will send us forth.

After that, we will never be the same. Whoever we meet, whoever we serve, whoever serves us... we will see them with new eyes... recognize them as a child of God, blessed and beloved. Everything we see and touch and hear will be seen as blessings, preparing us to live the mission and vision we proclaim.

Whenever we reach out and serve our brothers and sisters and realize that we are looking into the face of Christ, we can be transfigured.

Today God calls us to be ready to climb to the top of the mountain of faith. When we come to the mountain, we must be ready to go back down again. And when we gather together here, we are also sent out to serve.

When God beckons us to "come," the journey up the mountain of faith is tough and dangerous. We are tested and we are pushed to new heights. We

wonder if we will ever make it. We worry that we don't have what it takes. But when we reach the summit, we look around and are amazed... the world stretches before us and we are confident that we are in the presence of God and experiencing God's glory.

When God created the world –the mountains and the valleys and everything that lives - God proclaimed it good. When God's own son plunged into the waters of baptism and climbed atop the mountain, God baptized him in the light of love. This week, as we press on and face our daily challenges and struggles, remember the One whose love has already claimed us. We are not just toiling... we are climbing to the mountaintop to witness God's glory, and we will never be the same again.

Let it be so. Amen

Beloved, Your strength may fail but God's hand never will!