

## This is My Story

Why shouldn't Christians watch TV? *(pause for a few puzzled looks or comments)* At the transfiguration, Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no one." *(encourage the groans)*.

Yes, we've just shared a "uuuuugh" moment. "Uuuuugh" moments are a part of life, and we can seldom predict when and from where they will come. Yet, thanks be to God, there are also "Aaaaahhh" and even "ah ha" moments. The story of the transformation is a story of another type of moment, one which is not so easily named.

It was a moment which was "beyond;" a moment where human words or sounds fall short. The transfiguration story tells of how God intersects, infuses and overshadows the world as we know it. It is a wonder-filled story, a once-in-eternity story, yet also a part of our story, our stories.

Mountain tops are powerful places throughout Scripture; they are places where God is more commonly encountered, a truth that may have much more to do with humanity than God. Mountain tops are where the air is crisper, the extremes more intense and seem to be removed from the norm. Mountain tops are also hard places to reach, not a place that one might just happen upon. Perhaps if we have not experienced many ah-ha moments, and if those moments beyond seem either long ago or not of our experience, then perhaps this story is ours today to encourage us to set a course, prepare to climb and set off on a God-guided quest.

On the mountain of the transformation story we also hear how the glory of God is not limited to humanity. Not only was Jesus "transfigured", seen with a glow that was beyond human, so was his clothing. God's glory infuses, effects and can be revealed in all of creation. Perhaps this story is ours today to remind us to open our eyes, to see the wonder, the beauty, the revelation of God in things that we see as ordinary as the clothing we wear.

God's command from the mountain top related to life in the valley, life in the ordinary, everyday. "Listen." Jesus spoke just a few words on the mountain top, those words give little insight or guidance in living for God and with each other. The transfiguration happened after Jesus spoke of his impending death, words which those closest to him did not want to hear or to happen. Perhaps this story is ours today in that we need to listen to the teachings and word of God, when those words are what we long to hear and when those words call us forth into places we would rather not go.

Moses and Elijah play major, not minor roles in the transfiguration story. Though for reasons unknown to me, the word resurrection is not commonly used in describing this return of two who spoke, lead and lived in God's way. Perhaps this is our story today to assure us that life does

indeed transcend that which we know as death, that life is eternal, and that our never-changing God has and does continue to reach out, speak to and pursue humanity. God's nature does not change, God's promises are not broken, and God's word is "living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

Our second reading for today is Peter's recalling of the story long after Jesus' resurrection and underscores the impact of this experience on his life and faith. It also offers us an opportunity to consider the importance of defining our "we". In speaking with several regarding this passage, each heard the "we" as the apostles or leaders of the early church. Yet who was the "we" who saw with their own eyes, only Peter, John and perhaps his brother James. "We" is perhaps one of the most misinterpreted words in the English language. We make quick assumptions when we use and hear "we". Perhaps this story is ours today as a prompting to take the time to define our "we"s, and to ensure that in the mind of the speaker and of the hearer it is understood when we are speaking for ourselves, or for a group, committee or organization we may be a part of. As we United Methodists gather together for General Conference this summer, words regarding policies, principles and procedures will be chosen, defining and understanding all the varying "we"s involved will be critical if we are to live together as the church and for the world.

Peter's reaction on the mountain shows a tendency of human nature when experiencing that which is beyond. Peter did not know what to "do" and seemed uncomfortable with simply being there. Perhaps this story is ours so that we might identify within our selves the tendency and desire to capture and control those moments which are beyond. To build shelters rather than descend from the mountain top and listen in all areas and aspects of life. Perhaps this story is ours today to remind us that we cannot contain God within the church, either facilities or organized religion. We cannot control where or how God makes God's self known or where or what God will bless with God's power and purpose. We cannot choose what ministries, which vines of God's all encompassing love, will bear fruit in any given season. All we can do, all we should long to do, is to listen, seek, experience where God's power is evident and join God there.

Today we will share in what is a "mountain top" experience for the followers of God in the way of Jesus. We, the Church universal, proclaim that God's grace is present in this sacrament. Perhaps this is our story today so that we might listen and hear God in ways which transform us and transfigure the world.

Lebanon First United Methodist Church

Scripture: Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9 (Jesus transfigured on mountain top)  
& 2 Peter 1:16-21(Peter recalls transfiguration)

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