

Natalie W. Bell  
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 Transfiguration Sunday

***Listen to Him!***  
***Luke 9: 28-36***

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus<sup>[f]</sup> 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,<sup>[g]</sup> 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**,<sup>[h]</sup> 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;**<sup>[i]</sup> **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.

Sometimes ***we CAN'T see things,***  
***even when*** they are right in front of us.

Think about ***fog horns***—

They can be the ***only warning*** of the arrival of a huge ship—  
 a ship you literally cannot see until it is almost to the shore.

Isn't that wild?

***How could something so large be so close and yet absolutely invisible?***

In the fog, you've got to really ***pay attention***.

This story of Jesus' Transfiguration is a story about ***paying attention***

It's a story about ***learning that what you are looking for***  
***is actually right in front of you!***

These disciples were dedicated followers of Jesus.

Peter had declared that Jesus was the Messiah.

But what they saw and heard on that mountain—

Was a ***NEW*** Jesus. Jesus in a new light, literally.

It was God, in all God's ***glory***, right in front of their eyes!

You can imagine how ***overwhelming*** that might have been.

*Peter knows* that what they are seeing is so important,  
 That he suggests they put up some *shelters* for them—  
 He wants to do what many of us want  
 when we encounter something spectacular—*preserve* it.  
 Freeze frame.  
 Which is never possible, is it?

The *sights and sounds of the Transfiguration* are amazing.  
 They saw—*Moses*, the giver of the Law,  
*Elijah*, representing the Prophets,  
 and then *Jesus*, the Messiah.  
 And you know what the three are *talking* about?  
 Jesus' *mission—his departure—*  
 It says: *they appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was  
 about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

In other words, they were *continuing a conversation*  
 that Jesus had started earlier with his disciples,  
 when he was telling them about his future, and his death.  
 He says in Luke 9:22:  
 “*The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected....and be killed, and  
 on the third day be raised.*”

After that, Jesus says that any who want to be his followers,  
 must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him.  
 Talk about a *difficult conversation to hear*.  
 Now, *Jesus wants to make sure they understand*.  
 He wants them to pay attention.

Some people say that we don't have these kind of  
 amazing visions or encounters with God today, but I strongly disagree.

***When have YOU seen the glory of God?***

***Let me ask it this way---***

When have you been overwhelmed by God's power—  
 on a majestic mountain?  
 Or in the awesome tides of the ocean?  
 In the lush green of a forest?  
 Or the smile of a baby?

These are similar to the Transfiguration.  
 They are ‘*mountaintop experiences*’, if you will.  
 And we ALL have these experiences—  
 Times when we see the glory of God.

And these experiences give us the *inspiration we need*,  
 to go back down into the valleys of life, right?  
 They *inspire and encourage* us in day-to-day life.  
 We remember them—usually for the rest of our lives.

*So, we DO see God*---if we are paying attention!

What they saw on that mountain was truly the *glory of God*.  
<sup>29</sup> *And while Jesus was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.*  
 In other words, they saw evidence that Jesus is *HOLY*.  
 More just a man—He is God.

And it’s important that *Moses* was there.  
 We all know Moses led the people out of Egypt, and through the wilderness.  
 He was the one who went up on Mt. Sinai and met with God,  
 and received the ten commandments on stone, as we heard today in Exodus.  
 And he was close to the glory of God,  
 that his *face started glowing* after that experience!

It’s also important that *Elijah* was there,  
 because he was the prophet who defeated the gods of Baal,  
 the one who relied upon God for every need.

And both Moses and Elijah left their ministries,  
 by *passing their mantle* to the next leader after them.  
 After Moses, *Joshua* led the people into the promised land.  
 After Elijah went to heaven,  
*Elisha* inherited his mantle and his role as a prophet.

And here is *Jesus*—on this mountain with, you guessed it—his *successors*!  
 Peter, James, and John, who will *carry on his ministry*, right?  
*Peter*, according to Jesus, will be the rock and foundation of the church!

Jesus has taken them to this mountaintop experience,  
because he wants them *to know Him, and carry on his ministry!*

They already know a lot *ABOUT Him*—  
through his teaching, healing, preaching, praying.  
But knowing ABOUT someone is different than *KNOWING someone*, right?  
Jesus wants to be *known* by his disciples,  
that they might truly *comprehend his power and mission*,  
and carry that out into the world.

Isn't this *true of us today*?  
Jesus wants us to *know* Him, so we can *share* Him with the world, right?

*How have you come to truly KNOW Jesus?*

Not just ABOUT him?

How have you experienced the presence of Jesus in your life?

Maybe you didn't even realize it was Jesus at the time!

Sometimes we have to stop and look back to understand he was with us!

God *enabled those disciples to see Jesus*, in a totally *new light*.

They saw their friend and Lord, from a completely *new perspective*.

When have you seen something ordinary---*in a new light*?

From a new perspective?

Ever seen a friend or loved one

*doing something that you never knew* they could do?

Francis Dorff has a story called "*The Rabbi's Gift*".

There was a *famous monastery* which once had been full of monks and visitors,  
but had fallen on *hard times*.

At last, there was only a handful of elderly monks going about their work,  
their prayer, and study with heavy hearts.

The only time their spirits were lifted was when

They heard that a *rabbi was walking in the woods*.

In the woods near the monastery was a small hut that this rabbi had as a retreat  
house, where he came *to pray*.

And when the monks in the monastery knew he was praying,  
they felt *supported by his prayers*.

One day, the abbot of the monastery,  
 hearing that the rabbi was walking in the woods, decided to *go see him*.  
 And when he reached the little hut, there was the rabbi standing in the doorway with  
 his *arms outstretched*,  
 as if he had been waiting to welcome the abbot,  
 who had given no advance notice of his visit.

They greeted one another,  
 and went in to the simple hut, to a table with a book of scripture opened.  
 They sat there, *prayed*, and then the abbot began to weep.  
 He *poured out his concern* for the monastery and the monks.

Finally, the rabbi said, '*You seek a teaching* from me and I have one for you.  
 It is a teaching which I will say to you and then I will *never repeat*.  
 When you share this teaching with the monks,  
 say it once and never repeat it.  
 The teaching is this. Listen carefully.  
 "*The Messiah is among you.*"

Well, the abbot heard that teaching, thanked the rabbi,  
 and went back to the monastery.  
 He said "**Listen** carefully," I will say this only once.  
 "*The teaching is this: One of us is the Messiah.*"

It wasn't exactly what the rabbi had said,  
 but they began to *look at one another in a whole new light*.  
 Is Brother John the messiah? Or Father James? Who is it?

In the days to come, as they went about their prayer and work and study,  
 they began to *see one another in a new way!*  
 They showed new love, respect, and lived with a new sense of *expectation*.  
 And soon the word spread, about this amazing monastery!  
 "Seeing Things in a New Light", the Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall, *Day 1*, 2007.

What if *Jesus is right here among us—if we will pay attention?*  
 What if *Jesus is talking to us—if we will listen?*  
 Jesus did in fact say in Matthew 18:20 that wherever two or three are gathered in his  
 name, there he is in the midst of them.

But do we *believe* that?

Do we *act* like Jesus is right here with us?  
 Do we treat each other *as people who have Christ within them*?  
 That's how we encounter Jesus today—in other people.

As we've been celebrating *Black history month*,  
 We've celebrated some amazing stories of our brothers and sisters of color,  
 Because we are *ALL children of God*,  
 And we can *learn* so much from our differences, and our similarities.  
 Hasn't it been a gift to learn these *new stories and be inspired in new ways*?

I was reading some of *Martin Luther King Jr's* words this week,  
 And his *last sermon* is so meaningful.  
 He spoke about going to the mountaintop,  
 and how it gave him the strength to carry on.

His last sermon was delivered on April 3, 1968, on the eve of his assassination,  
 at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee.  
 He had come to support a sanitation worker's strike,  
 and was asked to speak at the last minute. He concluded with these profound words:

*I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountain top. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. **Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.***

We too don't know what will happen next in life,  
 But what if we *allowed ourselves to be changed*  
 by our experiences on the mountaintops of life?  
 That's what happened to the three disciples on that mountain, *they were changed*.

It was good for them to see *Jesus with Moses and Elijah*  
 Because soon people would be saying  
 Jesus had broken the law and defied the prophets  
 And they could remember this moment.

It was good for the disciples to hear God's voice say, *This is my Son, whom I love*,  
 Because soon, people would be saying that Jesus was not the Son of God.  
 Or that God didn't love Jesus.  
 And they could remember this moment.

It was really good when God said ...*Listen to Him!*  
 Because those words summed up the whole experience,  
 and gave them something to do when they left the mountaintop.

Mountaintop experiences are *touchstones*—  
 times to go back to, memories that sustain  
 and *encourage and inspire* us during through the valleys of life...  
 We learn and see things in a new way, in a new light,  
 And it changes our lives for the good.

Think about *how YOU have been changed!*

And those last three words -- *Listen to Him!*  
 Those are words for us—we are called to Listen to Jesus,  
 On the mountaintop, and in the valleys of life.

The three disciples saw and heard this amazing Transfiguration,  
 So after this, were their lives easy?  
 No.  
 Did they totally understand Jesus, his mission, and their mission going forward?  
 No.

But their lives were changed.  
 They started to really *know* Jesus, not just *about* him.

And you can bet that this experience carried them  
 through some real valleys and hard times of life.

This Wednesday is *Ash Wednesday*, the beginning of Lent—  
 our time of preparation for Easter.  
 It's a *valley* time...on our way to the mountaintop of Easter morning.  
 It's the perfect time to *obey* those last three words from God's voice—  
 To really *LISTEN to Jesus*.

Lent is the time to listen with an attitude of *expectancy*.

When we come to worship each week,  
We want to prayerfully come ready,  
To *meet* God, to *see* God, to *hear from* God!

Worship is more than just hearing and seeing some good things—  
It's about an *encounter* with our living, loving Lord!  
And it doesn't just happen in worship—it can happen *anytime*, if we pay attention!

But this Lenten season, I am urging all of us to reset, and rejoin our community,  
In-person if at all possible, or faithfully online if that is what's really needed.  
But I'm asking us to be *ready to meet Jesus*...in a person, a song, a word.  
And God is asking us to *Listen*, so that we can hear what needs to be heard!

May we enter this holy season---*paying attention*,  
Looking for God's presence—*right in front of us!*  
May we know that every encounter with God *changes* us,  
And *prepares* us for daily life.  
And may we *Listen—Listen to Jesus*, and follow Him. Amen.