

## *Transfiguration Sunday 2022*

*Fr Daniel E. Hoffman*

*Luke 9: 28-43*

Something big, important, and meaningful is happening on the Mountain of the Transfiguration....and if you and I want to figure out what any of this means for us today, we need to begin with three perspectives regarding scripture:

Whenever we hear a DATE, or time mentioned, it is ALWAYS much more than a mere timestamp/datetime.

Whenever we hear mention of a PLACE, it is always more than a mere GPS location

Whenever we hear the names of characters mentioned it is always more than a mere guest list

Today's story as told by Luke has all three of these elements in the forefront of the story, so let's dig in a listen up! BECAUSE unlike Las Vegas, what happens on the Mountain does NOT stay on the mountain, rather it spreads across time and space to change the whole cosmos.

The opening sentence asks us to look at the timeline, when it says very clearly that all of this takes place eight days after these sayings.....So if we look back we notice that immediately before this story, Luke records the feeding of the 5,000, and Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah, and some generic teachings by Jesus, but even more there is the matter of the Disciples missionary journey, and how upon their return, the word about the healings and miracles they were able to effect in Jesus name.....all of which causes HEROD to speculate about the possible RESURRECTION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.....EIGHT DAYS has EVERYTHING to do with Resurrection, but not John the Baptist's resurrection, this is about Jesus Resurrection.....

YES Herod you are on to something, but it is not that John has been raised, it is that Jesus who you and all the power of the Roman Empire will seek to undo will be Raised from death...

When ROME says DEATH, and God speaks LIFE, God wins, the Kingdom comes and EMPIRE is set in its rightful place of humble service.

So have you ever noticed that most baptismal fonts are 8 sided, or that our worship on the FIRST day of the week, is actually the EIGHT DAY, the first day of God's new creation.....Or that the day of Pentecost the day when the Church is born is seven weeks and 1 day after Passover, an OCTAVE, eighth day in its own way.....

Now Peter, James and John know this but they clearly do not comprehend it....These are Jesus top three disciples, his inner circle, the brightest and best of the 12 but until they see for themselves the crucified one standing before them risen, they just do not get it....They are the clueless...but what about us, you and me who have the luxury of time passed, and centuries of church history that give us a very different perspective.....Do we see the Mountain of the Transfiguration as a turning point in Luke's Gospel, in a way that allows that dazzling light to become a light on our path of discipleship, leading us forward in certain hope of the resurrection reality, rather than in fear of all that the world and the evil one throw in our way?

In Luke's Gospel the Mountain of the Transfiguration and the Mountain of Calvary stand as if they were the two great towers of the Brooklyn Bridge. When we tie them together in a purposeful way, as if all of this is a part of God's plan, then the road that is suspended beneath becomes our pathway for discipleship connecting all that has come before, with all that follows.....The road where we walk together in faith, with the crucified and risen Christ leading us in his way for us and for all...

But notice what happens when Peter, James and John encounter the incredible mystery of Jesus on the mountain, engulfed in dazzling light, having a conversation with Moses and Elijah.....Out of their sleepy haze they offer to build three booths, CABANAS so that the three can take a load off and settle into a real conversation with cocktails and appetizers....

But the mountain is NO PLACE TO LIVE, there is no water, no food, nothing there that can sustain life.....but what Moses and Elijah know that Jesus is learning is that what is there on the mountain is God's living presence, God's own living word, that does give life, that in fact sustains life for God's people in every time and place.....

Moses went to the mountain to pray and receive the 10 commandments, and after he was gone 40 days the people thought he was dead, so they went with plan B, the golden calf, and when Moses returned and the Living word, met the Golden calf, God's word brought DEATH to SIN, and it was not pretty, but it was GOOD!

Elijah went up the mountain to escape an army of soldiers who had orders to kill. He hid out in fear of his life and when the storms came, and the soldiers fled, Elijah heard the thunder, and he felt the earth shake, and then he heard the still small voice. A voice of promise and hope, and because of that still small voice Elijah went down the mountain to speak God's word of life, to the powerful and the powerless, and he was known to be one of the greatest prophets, so great that he was taken up into the heavens, RESURRECTED, before the eyes of God's people.....

Moses, Elijah, and Jesus have all been to the mountain and because they have been to the mountain, what they do, and say in the valley, is always about God's word of life.....and that is nowhere more true than in Jesus which is why Jesus cautions the boys who went up with him, NOT TO SPEAK about what they had seen or heard.....UNTIL the day of RESURRECTION it will make no sense, but AFTER THE DAY OF RESURRECTION it makes perfect sense..... It is maybe the ONLY thing that does make sense.

And here is the thing.....the time and place, where you and I become characters in the ongoing story of God's word bringing hope and peace to a troubled world.....We are here today, in the heart of the resurrection reality. This is our eighth day,

Like the Mountain of the transfiguration, we come to this place, weary and tired, worn down by all those things that cause us fear and dread, but here in this place we are engulfed in the light of God's good news. WE hear words of forgiveness, we hear a story that is full of hope....REAL HOPE that is grounded in the lives of people just like us, who God has called to follow

Martin Luther went to the mountain and spent a year translating the New Testament into German in the Wartburg Castle.....When he finished his work, he returned to Wittenberg and found the city in chaos so he settled in preached, taught, and spent the remainder of his life with a death sentence over his head, yet filled with HOPE and JOY, he reshaped the life of the Church to take on the form of its head Jesus Christ.....

Martin Luther King began one of his boldest speeches with the words I HAVE BEEN to the MOUNTAIN.....and he too lived in hope, knowing the risks, and the threats he pressed onward with a word of freedom and new life for our nation...

What happens on the mountain is all about having a vision, a breath taking, light dazzling vision that changes our perspective forever.....Because once we have been to the mountain, we know its not just that Christ WAS RAISED.....CHRIST IS RISEN, and our real question of faith is to ask ourselves if we really want to build booths, and savor the moment of divine mystery in some religious retreat.....OR do we go down the mountain, and get to work in the valley, where things are messy; where real fears are met with GOOD NEWS, tragedy is addressed with compassion and companionship, and the uncertainty of tomorrow is centered on the very one who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, the one we know to be God's own beloved son, the one we listen to.....

I don't know about you, but I am headed down the mountain, renewed, refreshed, and ready to follow.

AMEN