

Meeting the Light of Christ **Luke 9:28-36**

Mountain-Top Experience

As many of you know, I love hiking. Of course, not everyone enjoys it. One time, a young adult from my church asked me, “Why go through all that effort to climb a mountain if you’re just going to come back down eventually?” I smiled and said, “Well, if you’re just going to get hungry again, why bother eating?”

Some things can only be experienced by making the climb—things you can’t see, feel, or understand unless you take that journey yourself. Maybe that’s why, throughout Scripture, mountains are places where people encounter God in profound ways.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Before stepping into the dark valley of suffering, Jesus took three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—up a high mountain. There, they witnessed something beyond their imagination: Jesus, radiant as lightning, speaking with Moses and Elijah. A voice from within a cloud declaring, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

The disciples didn’t fully grasp the meaning of that moment, but the encounter changed them forever. The Transfiguration is one of the clearest examples of a mountaintop experience—a glimpse of divine glory, a word from God, and a transformation that reshapes everything. At the heart of this story is not just revelation, but transformation—an experience that calls us to see anew and live differently.

Encountering the Greater

Mountaintop experiences don’t always come with shining light and heavenly voices. They aren’t always supernatural or surreal. Sometimes, they happen in the midst of ordinary moments that leave us forever changed.

A pastor once shared his first visit to the Grand Canyon. As he stood at the edge, taking in the vastness, he felt an overwhelming sense of his own smallness. Yet, rather than feeling intimidated, he felt at peace. In that moment, he let go of his self-importance and found deep rest in something far greater than himself. The experience transformed him—not through words, but through the sheer grandeur of creation.

Think of John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience. On May 24, 1738, Wesley was listening to a reading from Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans when suddenly, he felt his heart “strangely warmed.” It wasn’t just an intellectual realization; it was an encounter with God’s grace that left him forever changed. From that moment on, his life and ministry took a new direction.

Both of these moments—standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon and standing at the edge of grace—brought transformation. Some experiences are so profound that once you’ve had them, there’s no going back. We call these mountaintop experiences.

The Mountaintop and Our Calling

Many of us long for mountaintop experiences. Maybe you’ve had one—a moment when God’s presence became unmistakably clear, when your faith felt alive, real, and powerful. These moments don’t always come suddenly. More often than not, they require seeking and following God’s calling.

Following God’s calling is like climbing a mountain—and climbing is not easy. It goes against gravity. It takes effort, perseverance, and struggle. In our spiritual journey, we face forces

that try to pull us downward—the pull of sin, the pull of fear, the pull of greed. Yes, the climb is hard—because the path of love, hope, peace, and generosity runs against the current of today’s world.

What drives our world today? Money. Wealth has become an idol. Power has become an idol. Instead of seeking peace through understanding and cooperation, many believe the only way to peace is through greater force. Take what’s happening in Gaza as an example. Some leaders have suggested that the solution is to remove everyone living there, build luxury resorts, and turn the land into a vacation spot. They claim that would bring lasting peace. But can a city built on the blood and tears of millions ever be a symbol of peace? No. It would only be a monument to greed and injustice. And yet, why do some leaders even consider such ideas? Because they believe they have the power to do it. Because they believe it benefits them. But faith calls us higher. It calls us toward God’s vision, toward a life shaped not by greed and force, but by grace and love.

Those Who Have Been on the Mountaintop

Those who have encountered the light of Christ don’t stay the same. They carry that vision into the world. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of those people. He had seen the mountaintop—not as a physical place, but as a vision of God’s justice, of a world transformed by love and truth. And that vision gave him the strength to keep walking, even when the valley was dark.

The night before he was assassinated, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke these words: "I’ve been to the mountaintop. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we, as a people of God, will get to the promised land." He had seen something greater—and that vision sustained him, even in the face of suffering. And that’s what mountaintop experiences do. They change us. They give us clarity. They give us courage to keep going when life is difficult. The disciples who saw Jesus transfigured came down from the mountain forever changed. Their vision of Christ’s glory gave them strength to endure hardship, to proclaim the gospel, to walk faithfully even when the path was difficult.

Purveyors of Awe

As we step into Lent, we enter a season of repentance, renewal, and reconnection with God. It’s a time to clear away distractions and draw closer to the One who calls us higher. This year, our Lenten theme is "Purveyors of Awe." Rev. Ki-seok Kim once wrote: "One of the most precious things capitalism has taken from us is the ability to be awed. Those who can pause to admire the beauty of a single wildflower, who can quietly observe the wind, sunlight, sunset, clouds, moon, and stars—these people can, to some degree, free themselves from the slavery of desire."

We live in a world that moves fast, measures everything, and reduces even people to their economic worth. The more we chase success and security, the more we lose our ability to marvel, to wonder, to be fully present with God and one another.

But Jesus invites us to the mountaintop. The climb isn’t about escaping the world—it’s about seeing it differently. It’s about recognizing God’s presence in the everyday— In the conversations we have. In the work we do. In the people we meet.

I believe you’ve received our Lenten Visio Divina booklet. Visio Divina, meaning “divine seeing,” is a spiritual practice that invites us to slow down and encounter God through images. In this practice, we open our hearts to what God might reveal through art, photography,

or nature. We allow color, shape, texture, and light to speak to us—not just with our minds, but with our souls. It’s an invitation to listen with our eyes, to be fully present to God’s beauty in creation and in the world around us. I encourage you to make this a daily practice during Lent. Take time each day to pause, reflect, and see with new eyes.

Christ Jesus invites us to climb— Not by withdrawing from life,

But by looking more deeply. By paying attention. By making space for wonder.

The climb is not easy. But when we go up, we do not go alone. Christ is already there. Waiting for us in radiant glory. Ready to reveal what is true, what is good, what is eternal.

Let us climb. Let us see. Let us be transformed. Amen.