



14B - TRANSFIGURATION - BIBLE STUDY

Wow

Abstract

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.
Mark 9:8 (NIV)

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14B - Transfiguration - Bible Study

Wow

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021 | EPIPHANY | TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY | Last Sunday After the Epiphany | YEAR B

Old Testament 2 Kings 2:1–12
 Psalm Psalm 50:1–6
 New Testament 2 Corinthians 4:3–6
 Gospel Mark 9:2–9ⁱ

Mark 9:2–9

Jesus invites his three closest disciples to go up a mountain with him. The disciples are dazzled by Jesus' altered appearance. In contrast to the voice that spoke to Jesus at his baptism, this time a voice speaks directly to the disciples and tells them to 'listen to him', before they then head back down the mountain.

This mountain-top experience provides a glimpse of the glory of God, but it is a passing experience. Have you had an unexpected or intense awareness of the glory of God? Was it difficult to leave the experience behind, wanting to hold onto it even as everyday life continued? How can we tune into God's 'wow' moments in our lives?

This week we explore unexpected life-changing moments.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,
 we ask you to show us something more of who you are
 and how awesome your presence is.
 Overcome our fear of the unknown,
 and lead us into a new experience of you.
 May our worship today be as on a mountain-top,
 a transforming encounter that empowers our discipleship.
 Amen.

Reading

Gospel

Mark 9:2–9

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ⁱⁱ

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Bible notes

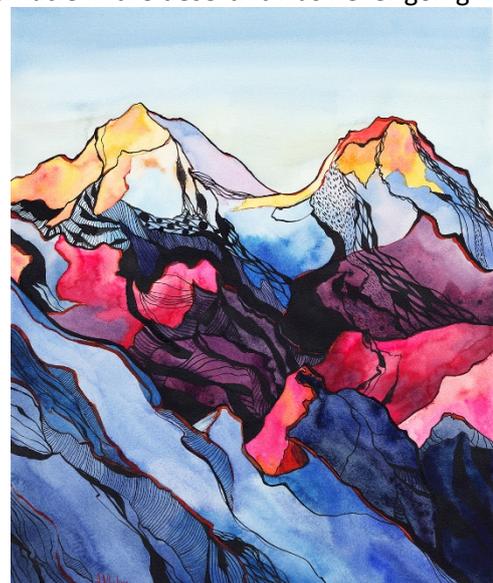
The setting of this story is on a high mountain. This tells Mark's hearers straight away that something remarkable is about to happen. God meets Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) and Moses (Exodus 19:3) on the mountaintop. And the revelation could not have come at a more appropriate time. Jesus has just turned the disciples' thinking upside down. Peter found words to articulate who Jesus is: 'You are the Messiah' (8:29). Jesus accepts this, but then tells them of his forthcoming suffering and death. He fiercely rebukes Peter's incredulity (8:33), but the disciples must have found it impossible to grasp this unimaginable future. Suddenly, there is tragedy ahead, but the glory of Jesus' true being is also revealed to them.

This story is told from the perspective of the disciples. They see Jesus, changed in ways they can only describe by saying that his clothes became brilliantly white. They see two of the greatest figures from the history of Israel speaking to Jesus as equals. And they are terrified! Peter stammers out words that reveal his yearning for this moment to go on for ever. He must have regretted the words as soon as they left his mouth – yet what words could be adequate to this experience? Peter's stumbling words are eclipsed by the voice of God. Cloud comes down on the mountain – Jewish tradition linked the cloud and the glory of God (Exodus 40:34) – and from the cloud, God speaks. God's words at Jesus' baptism (1:11) were spoken to Jesus, but these are addressed to the disciples. God's voice gives the disciples the words to make sense of what they have seen – this has happened because Jesus really is the Son of God – and they are reassured that they should listen to him. Finally, as they return to 'real life' at the foot of the mountain, Jesus tells them to share this with no one, picking up on Mark's theme of secrecy until the full revelation of Jesus' identity in the crucifixion.

Peter's response to the presence of Moses and Elijah shows how much he longs to hold on to this special moment. On this mountaintop, he wants to find the resources to build dwellings, so that they can stay together as God stayed with the people in the tabernacle in the desert. It was never going to happen that way; this was a moment of fleeting brilliance. But human beings yearn to embody their faith in bricks and mortar, and many of our churches bear witness to this passion to give concrete expression to our moments of wonder. How can we balance our glimpses of God's glory with our desire for stability?

Picture pointers

- How well does this image illustrate your experience of 'wow' moments?
- What experiences have been most transformative in your life?
- How do you feel about 'coming back down the mountain' after a 'wow' moment?



Go with God 24/7

Try and put your most recent experience(s) of God into words: either by sharing with a friend, or by writing down on paper or in a diary.

We are sent out

Lord Jesus, raise our expectations
of what it means to encounter God
not just in this place but in every place,
in all the places we shall be in the day ahead.
Help us every day to discover something new
about God's ways, about what God wants of us –
and change the way we see the world,
and the way we act.
Amen.

ⁱ Revised Common Lectionary. (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.