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Sierra Pines United Methodist Church  
Sermon: 3/2/2019  
Stand-Alone Sermon  
Scripture: Luke 9:28-36

## The Long View



<Luke 9:28-36>

*28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.*

*30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.*

*33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said.*

*34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"*

*36 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.*

In today's reading Peter, John, James and Jesus hiked up to the top a mountain - possibly Mt Tabor that is west of galilee and 1,886ft tall. Jesus goes off to pray as the disciples rest. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell this gospel story.



We don't know about its historic accuracy, but clearly something glorious and mysterious happened as Jesus prayed on the mountain top. Jesus was transfigured. He was changed in some way. What a holy, glory-filled moment. One that is hard to grasp.

Peter's response to this moment was what he thought was a bright idea. Let's build 3 shelters/tents/shrines, one for each of you. Each year the Jewish people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles to mark 40 years in the wilderness. They built booths as a reminder of the type of dwelling place and to represent God's protection, provision and faithfulness. Peter has just glimpsed something amazing. He doesn't know quite what to do but he wants to do something, so maybe a booth would be a good choice.

In our faith lives, there are times like these disciples when we experience great spiritual moments. And when we do, we want to linger there. It's those moments, that give us the strength and hope to face the darker times, to face whatever comes next. The image of Jesus transfigured and the glory of God shining through and the voice from the cloud give the disciples a glimpse of unimagined possibilities. Shown in glory with Moses and Elijah, Jesus is revealed as the culmination of the story of a God who comes, again and again, to rescue God's people.



At the top of this mountain, the disciples get a stunning view of life with Jesus. One that opened them to the possibilities of a future glory. You can see a long way from the top of a mountain. You can get some perspective from the top of a mountain. You can see the whole forest, and not just the individual trees! And you

can see the next mountain that is just up ahead. Sometimes, you can see the sun shining! When you stand back enough, you can see that as MLK said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" At the top of the mountain, there is **the long view**.



But we can't stay at the top of the mountain just admiring the view in the distance. To get to the next mountain, we have to go down to get there. And sometimes down is a long way down where the shadows are long, and

the fog swirls around, and all you can see are the individual trees.



Where are you today in this picture? Are you on that mountain at the far side basking in God's transfiguring light? Are you standing by the rock on this side of the picture looking at what is to come? Are you down in the valley, wondering if you have the stamina to climb the mountain?

This week, many of us have been and still are down in a deep valley. The passing of the Traditional Plan at GC has left so many folk broken hearted and wondering what is next.



In our scripture, before Peter can build any booths, a cloud descends over all of them and they find themselves surrounded by a thick fog. The disciples are terrified as they hear a voice telling them that "This is my Son, my Chosen. Listen to him." Booths are not mentioned. Instead they are told to listen to what Jesus says.



However great an idea it might be for the disciples to commemorate this great spiritual moment that they were having, the instruction instead that they are given as they are caught up in the foggy cloud is to listen to Jesus.

Are we listening to the right voice? Can we hear Jesus' voice? Whose voices are we ignoring? Perhaps they are the voices that Christ is speaking through? **What would Jesus say to us today?**



I have heard the cries this week of so many United Methodists with broken hearts. But none more so than from the LGBTQ community, whose very core of their being that God created is denied as being incompatible with Christian teaching. I hear their cries as the voice of Christ.

One of our own, Sam, sent me this in an email (used with permission): *The compassion and love of Jesus is limitless, yet we feel somehow compelled to concoct a domain of exclusivity. I wonder, if Jesus were here today, who would he hang out with? To whom would he minister. I don't have to wonder, I know. He would be found amongst the downtrodden and the marginalized. He would minister to the girl at the border escaping violence in her home country. He would weep with an AIDS patient and lay healing hands upon our modern-day lepers. He would fellowship and break bread with the homeless. He would minister to those who have been behind bars and wish to start a new life. He would touch the hands of the meth addict, the alcoholic and the heroin user. He would tell them he understood their pain, their loneliness and their deepest fears. He would assure them there was a better way and would lead them on a different path. He would pick up hookers, pickpockets and drunks along the way and transform their lives. He would go to gay bars and dance and sing and drink with the queer folk. He would find them funny and in pain, and he would love them all and invite them to come and be with him on his journey.*

I think Sam is right. That is what Jesus would do and say. Whose voices are you/we listening to? Whose voices are you/we deliberately seeking out?



I have hope that we will climb the mountain once again because I know that the long view is glorious. The sun will shine again. The fog will lift. But even here where we can't see, we can listen. And so, I invite you to listen. At this time, as United Methodists, may we take time to pause, listen and actively wait for the Spirit's leading. And then I invite you to put on your hiking boots and come on the journey to healing and hope remembering that like Jesus, you too are God's beloved children. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Let us pray* - Shared a poem/meditation by Elizabeth Stevenson.<sup>1</sup>

#### Resources

Hunt, Janet. "The Transfiguration: God Has the Long View" in *Dancing with the Word Blog*. January, 2016. <http://words.dancingwiththeword.com/2016/01/the-transfiguration-god-has-long-view.html>.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Stevenson, *enfleshed*, November 7, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/enfleshedword/posts/oh-my-dear-onesi-know-you-were-hoping-for-a-once-and-done-for-an-earthquake-a-tidal/2263664533863251/>