

## Luke 9:28-36

Transfiguration; February 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

What makes a day “ordinary” or “extraordinary?” Which would you rather have? Would you want to go on an ordinary vacation or an extraordinary vacation? Would you want to go on one of those trips that is on your “bucket list,” or just going to the same place you have gone for the past 20 years? Would you rather go to McDonald’s for lunch or that 5 star restaurant that everyone is talking about? Would you rather experience something that happens only “once in a lifetime,” or something that is “safe and comfortable?”

I think that if we would answer those questions, we would want to know how “extraordinary” is defined. An extraordinary day can either be good or bad, right? There are times that we are glad that we have had an ordinary day instead of an extraordinary day that may have ended in a car crash. If we had left the house only two minutes earlier, it would have been us hit by another vehicle on the highway. We would rather have an extraordinary day when we land our dream job, than the day that unexpectedly find out that our position has been eliminated.

Peter, James and John were going to have one of those days that wasn’t just “once in a lifetime” day. They were going to see one of those days that only happens once in the history of the world. When they began that day, they had no idea how their day was going to end. They would see the answer to the question: **“Who is this Jesus who appears in Glory?”**

For two and half years, Jesus’ disciples had seen some pretty amazing things. They saw how he changed water into wine. They saw the five thousand fed from five small loaves of bread and two fish. They had seen Jesus drive demons out of people. They saw him calm the storm. They had listened to his parables and illustrations. They were amazed at how clearly Jesus could teach all kinds of different truths. They had experienced highs and lows over those years.

But now that time that they had with Jesus was getting closer to the end. Jesus had come into this world with only one purpose in mind. He didn’t come to setup an earthly kingdom. He didn’t come to change the politics of his day. He didn’t come to get the Romans off the backs of the Jewish nation. He **“came to seek and to save what was lost.”** (Luke 19:10) As Jesus got closer and closer to the day that he would be crucified, he began to prepare his disciples more and more for that day when he would make the payment for the sins of the world. Every day would be one step closer to the cross.

A week before the events of our text Jesus spoke about his upcoming death. He couldn’t be any clearer: **“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** (Luke 9:22) They didn’t like Jesus to talk that way. They didn’t want to hear about his death. After all, he was the **“Christ of God.”** (Luke 9:20) Whether they liked it or not, it wasn’t going to change the reality that Jesus had come into this world to die.

As true God, Jesus knew full well what was in store for him in Jerusalem: mockery, lies, a whip ripping flesh from his back, thorns pushed on his head. He could hear the hammer driving the nails through his hands and feet. As difficult as it would be, he was willing to do it. But it would be different for his disciples. Even though he had prepared him, they could never be fully prepared to face what they were going to see only a short time ahead of them. Jesus took 3 of his closest disciples up **“a mountain to pray.”** Why a mountain? Perhaps to get away from everyone else? Perhaps it would be a peaceful place to rest? How long did Jesus pray on that mountain top? Luke may give us a clue to the answer to that question when he says that **“Peter and his companions were very sleepy.”** It had been a long day. Perhaps, the daylight had turned to darkness. It was hard for them to stay focused. I think we can understand them. (It’s not always easy to stay focused in church, right?) They wanted to listen to him pray. They may have even wanted to pray with Jesus.

Then it happened. They became **“fully awake.”** I don’t think we can even imagine what that must have looked like to the disciples. The darkness of night was broken. **“The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”** There was no sleeping any more. Not only was Jesus standing there in all of his glory, Moses and Elijah was standing next to him. Moses – the great prophet of the Old Testament, the law giver, the one who had seen his glory on Mount Sinai. Elijah – the prophet who was taken from this earth in a flaming chariot. They were talking with Jesus. Luke tells us the content of their discussions: **“They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”**

For Moses and Elijah, it was not unusual for them to talk with the Son of God. For 1400 years, Moses had been with Jesus in heaven after his death. For 800 years, Elijah saw the glory of God in heaven. They were discussing what would happen within a few months in Jerusalem. How reassuring this must have been for Jesus! We don't know the exact words they spoke, but we can imagine Moses and Elijah saying, *"Hang in there! Don't give up! You're almost there. The end is in sight! You will come out the Victor!"* Then not only did the disciples hear the words of Moses and Elijah, they heard the voice of God the Father: **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."**

It doesn't get much better than this! It is no wonder that Peter wanted to stay on that mountain top. Wouldn't you? **"Master, it is good for us to be here."** But Jesus didn't come into this world to stay on this mountain top. If he did, he would not have completed his mission. This world would not be saved. The sins of Peter, James and John would not have been forgiven. They would not have been able to stand in the presence of the almighty God. No one could. Jesus didn't stay on that mountain. He climbed the Mount of Calvary. Peter and his companions didn't stay there. They went out into the world with the message of Jesus. Later Peter would exclaim: **"We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."** (2 Peter 1:16-18) This Transfiguration would strengthen and encourage the disciples of carrying out the mission of **"making disciples"** in the world.

Jesus' Transfiguration does the same thing for us. We see pain and suffering all around us. We hurt. We fear. We may even question God himself. We may work for a business that is closing. We don't know how we are going to face the cancer that we have just found out about. That's when we climb back up the Mount of Transfiguration to catch a glimpse of glory. That glimpse helps us to cope with every hardship that we experience in our life. We have a God who will carry us through everything in this world so that we can join him forever in that glory of heaven.

On Wednesday, we once again enter the season of Lent. We watch Jesus go to the cross once again. Lent also reminds us that Easter is just around the corner. It is Good Friday and Easter that changes everything. There we see that Jesus can make every day of our life extraordinary. May we join with Peter in saying: **"Master, it is good for us to be here!"** Amen.