

Garth Wingfield – St. Timothy’s Herndon

February 15, 2026

Last Sunday After Epiphany, Year A: Exodus 24:12-18, Psalm 2,
2 Peter 1:16-21, Matthew 17:1-9

“This is my son, the Beloved... listen to him!”

I speak to you in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

If you’re anything like me, you breathe a huge sigh of relief when you see one of those bright red arrows on a map with the words, “You are here.” I’m talking about the kind of map you find at the museum, or Six Flags, or the mall. You’re trying to find the Foot Locker and you end up at Cinnabon.

If only real life had arrows like that. If only, in times of confusion or disorientation, we had big, clear signs communicating to us with assurance, with *reassurance*: “You are here.”

In our Gospel from Matthew today, we hear the voice of God speaking with this same kind of power and certainty. Now, for a little context, the story we just heard happens a few lines after the disciples have been... well, *confused*, actually, about who Jesus really is. In the midst of all this confusion, Peter *points* to Jesus and blurts out, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living

God.” This is an incredibly bold thing to say. What he’s saying is, “*This man... is God incarnate in our midst!*” Only the disciples don’t believe him. They need a higher authority.

With Peter’s words still ringing in everyone’s ears, we come to today’s passage, which begins with Jesus leading Peter, James, and John up to a mountain to pray. Almost immediately, Jesus is astonishingly *transfigured* before them. Our gospel writer Matthew tells us Jesus’ clothes become dazzlingly white... and even more impossibly, sunlight pours from his face. Can you even imagine what that must have been like? Then, God speaks to them from within a cloud, announcing: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased... *listen to him!*”

If that doesn’t stop you in your tracks, I don’t know what will. When God shouts this on the top of that mountain, he’s not only affirming what Peter just said, but He’s also *preparing* these people to walk with faith... into the unthinkable reality that lies ahead for their Messiah: suffering, death, and resurrection. “Listen to him.”

I've often wondered why God has to put such a fine point on that event on the mountaintop. Why does God have to *shout* to everyone from the heavens – as he also does at Jesus' baptism earlier in the gospel – essentially grabbing the disciples by the lapels and shaking some sense into them. Shouldn't what they've *seen* be enough? Because what they've seen is miraculous. Listen to the economy of Matthew's language here: "And he was transfigured before them." (PAUSE) That's it. So simple. No flowery adjectives. That word – "transfigured" – is translated from the Greek, *meta-more-PHO-oh*, which is where we get our word "metamorphosis." One scholar notes this word conveys a change of *inmost* nature... that's outwardly visible. So, the disciples are able to see Jesus' *inner* divinity... through his *visible* radiance.

I want to point out another thing about this encounter. Only in Matthew's gospel is there an emphasis on Jesus' face. Mark only writes about Jesus' *clothes* being transformed... and Luke says in *passing* his face somehow changes, but Matthew writes, "His face shone like the sun."

The disciples came to the mountain to pray, and they got Jesus in all his majesty. They expected quiet and solitude, and got glory and fullness... and clarity.

I wonder what *we* expect when we pray... and if we're ready for what we might receive. Sometimes, astoundingly, we hear the voice of God. It could be a whisper... or a fleeting thought... or a *feeling* that surprises us. It's happened to me. It's probably happened to you, too. And prayer isn't the only place where God speaks to us. Sometimes God shows up in the world around us... in the faces of those we encounter.

Mother Teresa often spoke about seeing the face of Jesus in others, especially in the poor and suffering. One of her most famous lines expresses this thought exquisitely: "Each one of them is Jesus in disguise."

By looking into the eyes of someone who's hurting or lost... by really *seeing* someone... we can see the light of Jesus. It might happen in outreach work through this parish. Or by sitting with a friend who's going through a rough breakup. Or by saying hello to someone who's invisible to others. Wherever

there's pain, there's the purity of Christ's abiding love... breaking through for *us* to see.

We can also see Jesus in faces beaming with *joy*. Think about the smile of a mom whose child just scored a soccer goal... or the way a friend's face relaxes as they share a positive diagnosis from their doctor... or the blissful expression of a stranger who's knitting quietly on the bus. That's the transfiguration. That's Jesus.

But here's the thing. Our gospel today doesn't *end* with the transfiguration. It's over before the disciples know it. They're left with a Jesus who's no longer radiating light. Our scripture tells us, "And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone."

Now comes the hard part... they have to go back down the mountain.

But friends, *that* is the good news of today's Gospel. Even more than Jesus shining brightly, even more than God speaking loudly... the promise of the transfiguration is... we're invited to *hold on* to our mountaintop experiences... to carry them with us for the hard work ahead. When we need

nourishment in the valleys of life, our mountaintop experiences sustain us.

When we need hope, they lift us.

Now, I'm sure I don't need to remind you, but Ash Wednesday is three days away. With it, we'll move into the long silence of Lent. Some people let the season wash over them. Others give something up. But I'd like to offer something to take on. It's a simple prayer practice called the Daily Examen. You do it at the end of each day, maybe in bed before falling asleep, and it only takes a few minutes. It works like this: Breathe deeply. Thank God for the graces you've received, then review your day as if you're watching a movie in your mind. Go over every moment you can remember, large and small. You'll be amazed at what you see in your mind's eye... the encounters that have drifted from your memory in the busyness of life. Maybe you've seen the face of Jesus that day. It may have been fleeting. It may have radiated quickly, then drifted away. But if you look, really look... Jesus was there. And that experience of Jesus... is something to hold on to tightly.

So, this week, as we walk out these doors and move toward Lent, with the slower pace it offers, I invite you to look into the faces of the people you encounter. Look closely, deeply. Like the disciples on the mountain, you

might encounter the divine. Maybe you'll hear the voice of God. Maybe you'll get a bright red arrow. But maybe, just maybe, you'll only recognize it later... when the still, small voice of God whispers to you softly: "You are here."

I speak to you in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.