



# SAINT MARK'S

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Peter, John, and James were lucky. Jesus, calls them apart from the other disciples. Come and walk with me. Let's go to the top of this mountain. They get up early and start the long hike up the mountain. The conversation is fascinating on the way up, but like always the disciples felt that they were missing something, Jesus always just seems to be one step ahead, one level deeper. Clouds are gathering; hopefully, the storm holds off. When they reach the top, the views are incredible, looking out across the land as far as the eye can see. Being on top of a mountain makes it so easy to put the worries of the world behind, and fall into the charm of, what many people have termed, a "thin place." This mountain top is a place where the separation of heaven and earth is extraordinarily small, a place where it's easy to see both at once. The disciples, being drawn into the lure of this thin place, begin to pray, they soon notice that something is going on with Jesus. His face is dazzling white, and suddenly there were two others with them. "What is going on?" They woke up early, they are tired, this must

be an illusion. The clouds become thick, and a voice proclaims “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

Peter, John, and James were lucky. They had it easy. They directly heard and saw God and the glory of heaven. We don’t always have it that easy. Seeing God's glory is not always that clear. In a broken world that has pain and suffering, God can be hidden at times. We can’t all be taken up to mountain tops and spoken to directly by God. But even though Peter, John, and James had the full glory of heaven explicitly revealed to them they missed an essential part, something fundamental, to the nature of God.

The glory of God, God's nature, was directly revealed to them and they tried to contain it. Peter tries to make dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. As if he wants to keep them in a box on top of that mountain. But this Transfiguration was not revealed so that God could stay put, but rather, it was revealed to proclaim God’s glory in the world. “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” Jesus is the connection. The central events of his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are the very embodiment of heaven and earth being co-mingled. Jesus is the ultimate “thin place.” You don’t have to go up to a

mountain top, you don't have to retreat to special place, you don't have to escape the world to find God.

Since that moment on the mountaintop the Holy Spirit has been working in all things and through anything to reveal God. This is one of the beauties of being part of a sacramental church. It's as if we get to practice. Sunday after Sunday, we see God in bread and wine, transformed by the community gathering around the table to give thanksgiving. We find God in the commonplace and the extraordinary, but it does not stop there. The sacraments tune our hearts to see God in the world. God is shot through in this world, and God's presence cannot be limited to a dwelling, or a box, or a mountain top.

The Spirit of God is at work in the world and is just waiting for you to see it and join in the dance. God can speak to you through anything. Where are your passions calling you to serve to help fill the world's need? What kind of service brings you joy? I see God every Thursday on this campus in the faces of parishioners joyfully serving at the food pantry. I see God on weekday mornings in the fall, in the teachers of the day school as they foster the future. I see God in staff meetings, and finance meetings, and evangelism meetings. I see God in the choir as musicians offer up their gift. Where do you see God? Where is heaven's

glory revealed to you? What transfiguration moments are happening in your life? Maybe it's while driving down the road, or eating dinner with your family, maybe it's learning how to fish, or while at the Grocery store.

The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton describes his, now somewhat, famous mystical experience on a simple street corner. For him, the mundane world was transfigured and the glory of God was shown. He writes, "In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers . . . This sense of liberation . . . was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. . . . I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."<sup>1</sup> Merton, saw God's glory revealed on a street corner.

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<sup>1</sup> Merton, Thomas, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Accessed <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/2464342-in-louisville-at-the-corner-of-fourth-and-walnut-in>

I invite you to see the world, with fresh eyes. Keep your eyes open to notice the glory of heaven waiting to be revealed to you on any street corner. See the world transfigured to God's kingdom and then act on it. The world is not a perfect place. Yes, there is pain, sorrow, and suffering present in this world but it is met measure for measure by the faith, hope and love, shown by people who have seen God's presence active in the world. People who have caught a glimpse of the Kingdom, the world transfigured before them, and acted like it was already here. You see when we start acting like the Kingdom has come into this world, where God's essence lies just below the surface, we help others to see it as well. And slowly but surely, the division between heaven and earth get just that much smaller, and the world becomes a little bit brighter with God's love.