



March 9, 2019 Best Day Ever

Given by Rev. Mattei

[Luke 9:28-36](#)

Sometimes you send children to retrieve something and, after a cursory glance in the general area, they proclaim that they “can’t find it anywhere.” Invariably, the husband, frustrated, also goes to the same place and the same answer can be heard: “can’t find it.” Then, obviously, the wife goes and in less than a nanosecond, she finds it. How do they do that? How is it that at times we are unaware of the obvious?

From the time of his return from the desert and entry into public life (Luke 4), Jesus’ mission intent and his divinity are revealed moment by moment. The disciples have seen Jesus perform miracles, serve the poor, listen to the marginalized, and therefore, fulfill the prophecy of God’s salvific age. His teaching in word and action command attention. He instructs his disciples and the crowds that active listening is the foundation of the kingdom ([Lk 6:46-49](#); [7:6-10](#); and conversely, [Lk 7:31-35](#)). His word is capable of healing and restoring people to life ([Lk 7:11-17](#)). Even nature listens to him ([Lk 8:22-25](#)).

In today’s gospel, the disciples witness the presence of legendary Elijah and Moses talking to Jesus, who transfigures before their very eyes. Moses and Elijah epitomize the law and the prophets, a shorthand for God’s revelation to Israel ([Lk 16:29](#)).

According to Luke, one may proclaim the gospel by explaining Moses and the prophets correctly ([Lk 24:27.44](#); [Acts 26:22-23](#); [28:23](#)).

Peter is seen wanting to capture this moment and just stay there as he is having the best day of his life. Just a week earlier, during the feast of Tabernacles commemorating the wandering in the desert, he summarized the impact Jesus has had on him when he confesses Jesus to be the Messiah ([Lk 9:18-22](#)). It is on that occasion that Jesus

breaks the news for the first time of his impending rejection, death and resurrection on the third day, and the necessity for his disciples to renounce their lives and follow him. That surprising prediction and discipleship requirement had no doubt shaken and confused his disciples who were expecting a different outcome for the Messiah and a glorious future for his followers: they were not prepared to follow a suffering Messiah before he would experience his glory. A triumphant Messiah would be more appropriate, thank you very much! No wonder here we see Peter at Jesus' Transfiguration with tons of nervous words and nonsensical ideas about building dwelling places for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

Peter just wants to preserve this moment forever and has no apparent inclination to just be quiet and take it all in. He had to be told to calm down and listen. Before God we better be still ([Psalm 46:10](#)), be quiet ([Isaiah 30:15](#)), and remain simple ([Lk 18:16-17](#); [Mt 19:24](#); [2 Cor 1:12](#)). Only by paying attention can we understand Jesus' glory into which the disciples are called. But it is evident from the verses that will soon follow that the disciples are concerned with a more egoistical kind of glory when they compete for status ([Lk 9:46-48](#)). At no point will the disciples demonstrate full comprehension of Jesus' vocation or of his glory, nor will Jesus ever abandon them.

However, who can blame Peter? Who wouldn't want to try to hold on to the wonder, the joy, the hope that he and James and John must have experienced on that mountaintop that day? Who would not be super excited to have all the pieces come together and see the heroes of one's faith all together in one place? Don't we try to hold on to the ecstatic experiences of a spiritual retreat or of our Sunday worship? Do not we feel disappointed when our spiritual retreats and worship services are not that ecstatic? Once we have savored something good, it is our habitual tendency to want to hold on to it, risking to make of that an idol to lift up and isolate for future reference ([Exodus 16:4-5](#)). But, again, when we experience personal and family turmoil, local and global crisis, when tragedies small and large grab the headlines, staying in that time and place apart with Jesus (and Moses and Elijah) seems awfully appealing.

But the mountaintop experience is only meant to give us a glimpse of the glory to come and strengthen us to the mission ahead. Jesus has not come to take us away from the world: after a time of deep Holy Spirit experience, he guides us back into a hurting world. In fact, the disciples' excitement of having seen his glory and the sense of wonder about Jesus' impact on them somehow remained with them. In today's gospel after the light faded; after the disciples followed him back down; after he encountered the crowd with all of its misery; only then as a response to Jesus' healing activity do we hear that 'all were astounded by the greatness of God.' The Transfiguration of Jesus may have happened on a mountaintop for only a handful to see. But that Transfigured One steps into our everyday lives and we are left to marvel at what God does down here in the middle of it all.

We see his glory as we connect to and are moved by the hurt and brokenness of the world. God has a mission in the world and we are part of it when we forgive others and correct the wrongs we do, when we break bread together, when we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, when we learn to listen and talk to each other with kindness and respect, when we support our brothers and sisters in need in Weeki Wachee, Haiti and around the world.

When we tap into the glory of God all around us, we have a sense of the transfiguration expecting us. There are better days to come; let us listen to him and be faithful.