

A Glimpse at Glory

**Sermon notes for a sermon
given by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young
Presented on Sunday, March 6, 2011**

Have you ever been travelling on an interstate highway and seen one of those signs that reads "Scenic Overlook?" Have any of you ever pulled off of the highway to take in the view? Maybe you were travelling a long distance and you just needed to stretch your legs a bit. Or perhaps you were getting bored with the never changing scenery and just wanted to get a little perspective. Sometimes it is helpful to take a break from the journey of life, step back, gain a little perspective and take a look at the bigger picture. Just like a scenic overlook can be a place to rest and recharge or a place to look ahead to see to where it is you are travelling, so too taking a break from the routines and drudgery of life can help us to see that we are on a journey, moving forward – sometimes slowly and sometimes too quickly – hoping to reach the finish line. Today is Transfiguration Sunday, a time for us to take a break from the road of faith and find ourselves in the presence of Jesus who brings us to the mountain top offering to us a scenic overlook.

Did you ever ask yourself why Jesus did not take all twelve of the apostles with him up the mountain? Why did he choose Peter, James and John while leaving the other nine back down at the bottom? And what about the others; why didn't Jesus invite all who were following him to come along to the top of the mountain? What was the big secret that only three of Jesus' followers could be trusted with?

In his book, *The Will of God*, Leslie Weatherhead states that he does not believe that God sent Jesus into this life with the sole purpose of

dying on a cross. He sees the cross as symbolic of human sin and as an instrument of evil which was used in attempt to kill God and thus thwart God's purpose of transforming the hearts and minds of humanity. If we can hold on to that thought and allow it to come alongside of today's Gospel reading we might begin to see another meaning to the transfiguration.

The account of the transfiguration occurs in Matthew after much teaching and the working of miracles by Jesus. All along the way Jesus meets with opposition from the Jewish and Roman leaders. That was to be expected and Jesus challenged their teaching, power and authority in the open for all to see. Those who were following Jesus, however, just did not seem to get the message. They thought that Jesus was ushering in a new world order where the powerless would be placed in authority. They thought that with Jesus a new regime would be set up where they could have their time in glory and give to the oppressors their just desserts. People were just not getting the message; they just weren't seeing the bigger picture of God's transforming love that was seeking to graciously level the playing field under the reign of God and not human political systems.

Maybe Jesus saw something in Peter, James, and John that he wasn't seeing in the others. Maybe he thought that if he could get the three of them to see the bigger picture then they would be able to bring others along. Did you ever suddenly see something or hear something and in the excitement of the moment you had to find a friend or even a complete stranger and share it. Maybe it was a beautiful rainbow or a pretty bird singing or a colorful sunset – it stirred you so deeply you just couldn't wait to share it. Perhaps in offering to Peter, James, and John a glimpse of his glory, Jesus was hoping to inspire them to see what was just ahead. Perhaps he

was inviting them to look up from life in the valley to see the bigger picture of life in the kingdom of God; to help them see that it is right here.

How disappointed Jesus must have been to hear the three of them responding by saying let's build a shrine right here and then we can invite people to come to the mountain top to see the glorious splendor of Moses, Elijah and Jesus. They just didn't get it and Jesus realized in that moment that there was more yet to do. There were more lessons to teach, more sick to heal, and in the end, he must of realized, it will take an act of God to bring people around to the truth. As they walked down from the mountain top Peter, James, and John must have felt quite privileged and I am sure they started talking among themselves how they couldn't wait to tell the others. Kind of like we get when we know something that others do not, "I know something you don't know; do you want to be in on the secret?" Jesus looked at the three of them with the eyes of God's love and right there on the side of the mountain before they reached the bottom called for the four of them to make a promise. "Do not tell anyone what you three just witnessed," Jesus cautioned them, "Until I am gone and raised from the dead."