

Luke 9:28-36

Transfiguration of our Lord

Feb. 25, 2001

Each week at the beginning of the Adult Sunday School class there is a time of sharing. What's your favorite ice cream might be the question, or what food do you like to cook. Tell about a Thanksgiving memory - tell a time you were afraid as a child. But the one that was greeted with silence was: tell of something you were ashamed to tell your parents. There are some things we keep to ourselves.

But surprisingly some of the deepest secrets that our friends and neighbors carry are not about sin and shame. Sometimes people keep secret a close encounter with God.

I remember Sally. She had told me of experiences back in the roaring twenties - I was a flapper girl she said. She told me of a night in a car when someone tried to rape her and she escaped - walked home through the darkness. But when she told me the story of that day her telling was different. Her husband was sick - she was feeling desperate - afraid. She said, "I walked out that door and suddenly the sky was changed and I saw Peter and the angels and I knew all would be well. I have always carried that moment in my heart. But I have seldom told anyone about it."

The gospel today tells a moment like that for Peter, and James and John. For it ends with these words, "They kept silent and in those days told no one of any of the things they had seen."

Seeing the latest movie will not induce silence, nor a beautiful sunset. A marvelous trip to the Caribbean will bring forth a shower of words. But coming close to the boundary between heaven and earth takes the words right out of our mouths.

How very much silence there is in the Bible about the encounters of his followers with Jesus after his resurrection. That he looked different is clear, for everyone seemed to have trouble recognizing him. But Peter never wrote down what Jesus looked like in the resurrection - nor did any of the others who saw him. **But I think**

there are some hints in the gospel for today. ~~It is a story~~ One gospel today is like those stories of the resurrection - for it is a story at the boundary - the boundary between heaven & earth, between time & eternity, between human & divine.

Jesus took Peter and James and John and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying the appearance of his face was changed.

That means that Jesus was suddenly not recognizable. For we know one another by the appearance of the face.

And Jesus' clothes became dazzling white.

And then Moses and Elijah appeared.

I have noticed that people who have visions always know who it is. Peter – Mary – Jesus. So the disciples knew Moses and Elijah. Like we know the people in our dreams.

But then a cloud came over them all and a voice spoke out of the cloud, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him." And when the voice had spoken Jesus was found alone.

And they kept silent in those days.

Have you ever sat across from someone you know well and kept back all the words that fill your mind and come from your mouth and wondered about this life that is in front of you? Maybe in that moment you too were reduced to silence. For all our words that box and package reality are sadly lacking when we consider the mystery that is another human life. Like me, known to me yet different, hidden, unknowable

Jesus they had eaten with, walked beside, accompanied across the lake in their boat. They had witnessed his great power to heal, they had heard his teaching, marveled at his authority. But now they must have sensed that they knew him not at all. The being changed, the glory, the heavenly voice. Peter and Mjohn and James could only keep silence about these.

So many times I have stood here before you and spoken of Jesus. Many of you must be able to guess what I will say of Jesus before I even speak it. The Lord of heaven and earth is reduced to slogans in my mouth.

Oh that you and I could become as Peter and James and John were that day! If only we could be reduced to silence and wonder and awe before our Lord.

For then he might break out of all the boxes in which we confine him. We would tremble before this presence, God with us.

And yet he comes to you this day not in glory and majesty that overwhelms you but in bread. In wine. In a most common and ordinary way. All the glory and power of God enter you masked by what is most common.

Don't be fooled by appearances. Your Lord enters you in bread and wine – your Lord is as near as your needy neighbor.

Wonder in silence.