

*2Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" 8Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.*

*9As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.*

They were terrified.

They knew Jesus – they had followed Jesus. They had seen him heal the blind, they had witnessed his casting out demons, they had heard his teaching. Twice they had seen Jesus feed a great crowd with a few fish, some loaves. They had been there when Jesus had awakened a little girl from the sleep of death. They had been on the boat when Jesus rebuked a storm and it was stilled, suddenly calm.

Another time they had been terrified – it was night – the wind was against them as they rowed across the Sea of Galilee. Then suddenly someone or something was on the water – walking. They were terrified. But Jesus said, "Have no fear – it is I." He calmed the wind and got into the boat with them.

It seemed that Jesus was always at the very boundary between the earthly, human realm and the supernatural, the miraculous.

And now, once more.

"Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white such as no one earth could bleach them."

Once more Jesus is right at the boundary between heaven and earth, crossing over the boundary of what is possible for humans. And then they saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say for they were terrified.

Can God be tamed – kept on a leash to sit up when I command and roll over, and bark? Can the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth be tamed in my obedience school to fetch for me? Can a wolf or a lion – or a grizzly?

Peter and James and John were full of ideas for Jesus. When Jesus told them he would suffer and die and be raised Peter was quick to rebuke Jesus. James and John would be asking for the best seats at the heavenly banquet, “Let us sit one on your right hand and one on your left in your glory.” But in this moment they were simply terrified.

You and I want to experience the power of God. We often pray for the miraculous power of God in praying for healing, for safety, for calm in the storms of life. But when Peter and James and John were in the presence of the power of God, when the power and glory of God shone in Jesus they could not handle it.

A cloud overshadowed them, a voice spoke from the cloud – This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him.

You would think that after all of that they would. Listen to him.

But from this moment on they do exactly what they were doing before this moment. Instead of following they will want to lead. Instead of staying with Jesus they will be running away. Instead of confessing Jesus they will be betraying him. Denying him.

The next time he will choose the three of them for a special mountain journey it will be to go up the Mt. of Olives, to the garden of Gethsemane. He will ask them to stay awake. They will sleep. He will beg them to watch, they will be overcome by weariness. They will not listen.

Sometimes people think that if they could just have some miraculous vision then they would believe. Or a great miracle, a healing a la Elijah then they would follow. Sometimes I think that if God would only tell me what to do, a la Moses, then I would do it. But the three who witnessed the vision of the glory of Jesus, who saw numerous miracles, who heard him teach day after day were as weak and faithless as I am.

Only the grace of God can save someone like me. Someone like you.

You would think I could get beyond the need to have Jesus give his life for me. But I never do. And so Jesus will go down off this mountain of transfiguration and head for Jerusalem. He will journey to the cross. This one who shines with the glory of God will bleed and die for me, for you. And he will do what all the miracles and all the teachings and all the prophecies of all time cannot do. He will save me, he will save you. Jesus will commit God to you for all eternity.

For God has sent his Son not to terrify you, but to love you.