

*Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" 6When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." 8And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. 9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."*

It was confirmation day. Jesus was presiding. "Who do you say that I am?" he asked the disciples. Peter was quick to answer, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus said, "Well done Peter – that is an answer right from God. Go to the head of the class, you will be my right hand man." And Peter was so proud that if that robe had had buttons they all would have popped off.

But then Jesus shared his plans with the disciples – that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the religious leaders and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And that star pupil Peter – so sure of himself said, "God forbid it Lord, this must never happen to you!"

But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me." If you want to be my follower, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life you will lose it but if you lose your life for my sake you will find it."

How quickly things changed. In an instant Peter went from being the star pupil to being the evil one. Years later St. Paul would write: “If any of you think he stands, take heed lest you fall.” I think it is in Proverbs that it says, “Pride comes before the fall.” I have learned the truth of that saying time and time again.

Six days later this is what happened: The three special disciples – Peter and James and John were picked by Jesus to go up a high mountain with him. On that mountain Jesus appearance changed. His face shone like the sun and his clothes were dazzling white. And Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared there with him. Once more the star pupil, Peter, had something to say, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish I will make three dwellings here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Peter was going to help Jesus; he knew what needed to be done. But while he was still saying this he was interrupted by a bright cloud enveloping them and a voice declaring, “This is my son, the beloved, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.” And Peter and James and John fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.

In just a week Peter went from button popping pride to fear that left him as good as dead.

So what is this story about? Right answers to confirmation questions? If you know Jesus is the Son of God you are in? And anyone who does not believe Jesus is the Son of God is out? Is that the point God was making on the mountaintop? No--- Peter knew the right answer but his close encounter with God left him like a dead man.

Is the story about God showing who is boss? Interrupting Peter – scaring him half to death?

Or is the story about what happened next? Jesus came and touched Peter and James and John and said to them, “Get up and do not be afraid.”

When you and I are rolling along in life we may think we know even better than Jesus does. Then something happens that knocks us to the ground. And all the pride and confidence in ourselves is lost. Then it is not enough to believe some things about Jesus. We need Jesus to touch us and raise us to our feet once more. “Get up and do not be afraid.”

It is a resurrection word – an Easter word that the disciples heard that day. Jesus raised them that day.

Every week we act this scene out. We fall down before the majesty of God afraid because of the ways we have failed God. On our knees we have nothing to say other than God have mercy on me. But Jesus reaches out to you, touches you with a word of forgiveness, his own life giving love on your tongue and between your teeth. And you rise - beloved children of God – unafraid.

Jesus never gave up on Peter – he wanted Peter to listen and to follow but Jesus never gave up on Peter. Even when Peter was thinking he knew better than Jesus, Jesus did not give up on him.

Jesus will never give up on you. He wants you to listen and to follow. But even when you think you know better than God, Jesus will never give up on you. Not even when you fall down into that final death. Rise, do not be afraid. Amen.