

I would like to preach a sermon this morning that takes you to the mountain top.

I want to preach a sermon that makes your eyes water and forces you to turn away because you encountered Jesus in dazzling white clothes and his face shining like the sun.

I want to compress time so tightly it explodes and it's as if it doesn't exist. So Elijah and Moses can join us and Jesus too. And I want you to be overcome with delight that you just want to stay here on this mountaintop with Jesus, Elijah, and Moses.

And I want my sermon to be like a bright cloud that overshadows you. And I want you to hear the voice of God and become so frightened you fall to the ground.

Afterwards, when my sermon's over and we're leaving, I'll tell you not to tell anyone about what happened. Don't tell anyone about how you were transported to a mountain top, and went blind for a moment when you saw Jesus's face, and how delightful it was. About how you just wanted to stay there forever until a bright cloud came and you heard the voice of God and got scared.

Don't tell anyone about that.

But I'm not sure how to preach a sermon like that.

I do know that we need to find a way to spend some time on this mountaintop though.

We like to tell stories. Lots of commentators lament that we overlook the transfiguration because it doesn't fit neatly into a story. At least the type of

stories we usually like to tell with easy plot points and straightforward movements.

Jesus is born, Jesus teaches and heals and performs miracles, Jesus makes people upset, Jesus is killed, Jesus resurrects, ascends into heaven, and will come again.

That's why other commentators have called the story "pointless." "[In] most of the gospel stories about Jesus, Jesus does something. He is always performing: demons are cast out, sick people are healed, the dead are raised. Isn't this the point of his ministry?"

So where does this transfiguration fit in?

Transfigure: to change shape, to change form, to change appearance.

By their very nature, transfigurations are disruptions and interruptions to our normal experience and the stories we tell.

So I want to preach a sermon that disrupts and interrupts our normal experience and the stories we tell.

I want it to be like a trapdoor that you fall through and enter another dimension, and become so bewildered you're not sure what's up and what's down.

But I'm not sure how. And I know this is all probably too self-conscious to be appropriate for a sermon.

But isn't that what transfigurations do? They call us into question: Where am I? Why am I here? Who am I? What's happening to me?

We are not outside of this event, but are addressed by it. Called by it. We are, in fact, transfigured by it.

We can no longer take the ordinary appearance as fully revealing.

The God who so often seems hidden and silent, is disclosed as present and audible as Jesus's body illuminates divine glory; the boundaries between heaven and earth are blurred and transgressed; the invisible is made visible; the eternal imbues the momentary.

Our normal way of seeing and perceiving the world is shattered and is no longer sustainable. The all-so human and ordinary face and body of Jesus now reveals the infinite depths of God's glory, and Jesus insists this is no time to build a dwelling or a monument up here on the mountaintop. Instead we must go down the mountain back into the world of the everyday.

Because the infinite depths of God's glory is hidden in the everyday and ordinary, in the face of another.

No longer can we perceive and make sense of our world through the ordinary stories we tell.

We can't tell stories about how immigrants are invaders, because Christ arrives in the presence of strangers; the glory of God may very well be denied and hidden from us. We turn away those seeking a home and a refuge.

We can no longer tell stories about how our Earth and its resources are disposable; or stories about how only our souls matter; the glory of God was revealed in the ordinariness of Jesus' material body and flesh.

We can no longer tell stories about how we're not good enough, that we don't do enough, that we're not worthy of this life: it's in the very ordinariness of our lives, that God's glory awaits disclosure.

So I want to preach a sermon that changes you, that reforms you, that transfigures you.

I can't do that. But the God revealed in the transfiguration of already has. Continues to Create, to sustain, to breathe life into this world, and into each of us

As we turn our journey towards Lent this week, we know the Cross is on the horizon. We know this world is full of terror and violence and death.

But it's precisely into this world that the transfiguration of Jesus calls out to us, addresses us, transfigures us, and opens us to possibilities we have not yet dreamed, to hope for things we have not yet seen.