

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -Transfiguration Sunday - February 15, 2026

Him again?

So good to see you.

And I want to offer a heartfelt thanks  
for a whole lot of things.

Your kindness and support as I continue to  
deal with this back and leg stuff.

Many of you know this is a lived reality  
in your own lives so I guess you can  
welcome me to the club for a while.

The other thing that I would like to  
particularly thank you all for  
is the release time last week  
so that I could be part of the annual meeting  
at first Lutheran.

I have to say I think this was a really big deal.

And it has to do with your kindness and generosity.

We were able to do that.

Important for me to be at that meeting.

Important I think for the congregation to have me there  
and the fact that you would accommodate that happening.

I think it's just a really good

kind of a colleague-neighborly thing  
that you've done so thank you for doing that.

As far as the Order of Service today  
a couple of things to point out.

One of them is  
as you're singing some of you are going to say  
this really sounds familiar  
and the reason it does  
it's actually the melodies from the Green Book.

So if you're remembering some of the melodies  
from the Green Book in the two settings  
that we use the most often  
you'll say oh yeah quite familiar  
but just different page numbers.

With that in mind the hymn of praise  
is actually right after the curiae  
so that hymn number, that hashtag  
you want to just ignore that  
and just go straight from the curiae  
to the hymn of praise.

A bit about today.

It is kind of a bridge day

in the sense that we conclude the season of epiphany  
that season of Revelation  
and you recall how we began it  
in the River Jordan.

Jesus baptized  
and a voice from heaven.

This is my son the Beloved  
with whom I am well pleased.

Today  
very similar words  
spoken on a mountaintop  
where Jesus is with his three followers  
Peter, James and John  
and that voice from heaven recurs  
and the words are not identical  
and maybe we'll take a bit of time  
during the sermon to talk about  
the subtlety or the nuance  
of those words  
and maybe we'll get to hear them  
in a new and fresh way.

[Music]

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 17th chapter.

[Music]

Six days later,  
Jesus took with him Peter  
and James and his brother John  
and led them up to a high mountain  
by themselves  
and he was transfigured  
before them.  
His face shone like the sun  
and his clothes became bright as light  
and suddenly there appeared  
to them Moses and Elijah  
talking with Jesus.  
Then Peter said to Jesus,  
"Lord, it is good for us to be here.  
If you wish, I will set up  
three tents here.  
One for you, one for Moses  
and one for Elijah."  
And while he was still speaking,  
suddenly a bright cloud

overshadowed them

and a voice from the cloud said,

"This is my son, the beloved.

Would am I well pleased?"

Listen to him.

And when the disciples heard this,

they fell to the ground

and were calm by fear.

But Jesus came

and touched them,

saying, "Get up

and do not be afraid."

And when they raised their eyes,

they saw no one except Jesus

himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain,

Jesus ordered them

to tell no one about the vision

until after the Son of Man

has been raised from the dead.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated?

Won't you be seated?

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you.

May the words of my mouth  
and the meditations of our hearts  
be acceptable to you,  
O God, our strength  
and our honor.

You might have noticed,  
if you like to watch British detective shows,  
sometimes they show you a scene  
and then the next scene has a caption,  
"Three weeks before,  
you're before."

How about six days before  
as in today's Gospel reading?

Anybody know what happened  
six days before?

I'm prepared to issue bonus points if you do,  
but if you don't, that's okay.  
I'm glad to remind you.

Jesus is with his friends,  
his followers,  
and he sees the end coming.

The inevitable consequence  
of Jesus being who he is,  
what he stands for,  
who he includes,  
all of that he knows  
is going to put him in the cross hairs  
of a strange coalition  
of the occupying empire  
and some from the religious establishment.

He's pretty plain when he says this  
to his followers that  
they plan to end him.

And six days later,  
he will rise again.

And now,  
Peter, James, and John  
accompany Jesus up a high mountain.  
And as long as I'm into television analogies,  
we're going to press the pause button,

and I'm going to offer  
something that I think  
Matthew's Gospel does uniquely,  
that you don't see quite as much  
in some of the other Gospels.

As far as Matthew is concerned,  
the disciple community is like a stand-in  
for the rest of us.

And Peter, James, and John in particular  
are stand-in for us.

And so we are invited right into this story,  
and I think maybe some of their point of view  
is helpful as we listen again  
to those words,  
"This is my beloved Son."

Listen to it.

Mountaintops are a significant location  
throughout Scripture, aren't they?

As Marilyn read today,  
Moses on the mountain, as he is illuminated  
with the glory of God preparing  
the ten words that would be issued

to the whole people newly liberated  
as a manifesto, a way of being a free people.

Elijah hung out in the mountains too.

You remember his story?

Well, he was actually running for his life  
because he had spoken truth to power  
and he had collided one time too many  
with the king named Ahab,  
and his wife, that Jezebel.

That really was her name, by the way.

And you remember Elijah's story?

There in that cave, that crook of the rock,  
there's an old hymn about that,  
maybe you even recall.

And how does God speak?

Not in the tempest or the whirlwind,  
but in a still small voice,  
but it is revelation  
to Elijah on a mountain.

Jesus himself, when he announces  
the rule in the realm of God,  
affirming that those who are born

and those who are poor  
are part of the realm of God,  
where is he standing in Matthew's Gospel?

Sermon on the mount, yes.

So here we are,  
prepared to hear a word of revelation.

Something significant is happening.

And as Jesus is transfigured  
in the presence of Peter, James and John,  
maybe they remember the stories of Moses  
and Elijah, and maybe they were quick  
to connect those dots,  
even though there was no Facebook  
and no photos of these personages.

But they know  
in whose company they are  
and who these two are conversing with Jesus.

There's a fair amount of debate, actually,  
and I will skip over a lot of this.

So now I'm hitting the skip button,  
like Tebow.

Do they even have Tebow anymore,

where you can skip through the commercial?

I'm going to kind of fast forward through the debate

about why does Peter say what he says.

Some would say he was blathering.

He didn't know what he was talking about.

But in Matthew's Gospel,

it seems that there's something else at work.

Something about holding this moment,

holding it in holiness,

giving it some sort of fixed place and time.

Something that people can draw upon,

especially knowing what Jesus said six days before.

You know, it sounds like a good plan, actually.

Nothing wrong with this, I don't think.

But it's funny to me that here is Simon Peter.

He doesn't even get all the words out of his mouth,

and God interrupts him.

Doesn't that happen a lot?

Holy interruptions.

And this one is that voice from heaven that says,

"This is my beloved, my son, with whom I am well pleased."

And there's something added here.

Listen to him.

Listen to him.

So the six days before when Jesus speaks of his pending death,  
the disciples sort of get through that.

When Moses and Elijah appear,  
they remain conscious and upright.

But that voice of the Lord knocks them flat.

They are leveled with fear.

Too much. Too much.

And it's here that Jesus comes up to them.

He touches them.

He says, "Do not be afraid. Get up."

There are things waiting for us.

When Jesus is baptized

and that heavenly voice affirms him,

that is his vocation.

He is baptized into that vocation to be present with people.

Even in their suffering.

And in those broken places.

And to bring healing, feeding and teaching.

And now in these moments on that mountain,  
the destiny is largely the same,

but also profoundly different.

Because now Jesus becomes present with us

in maybe the most broken

and sometimes brutal aspects of our humanity.

That Jesus will continue to be who Jesus is

and to do what Jesus does.

But he does that now against the backdrop knowing

that there will be a fatally violent reaction to him

for who he is and what he does.

Get up, disciples.

The world is waiting.

And maybe we like them for God.

That last thing he said six days before.

That thing he said about

will be raised again.

It is that almost throwaway phrase

that makes all the difference.

That no matter what humanity throws out there,

God is undeterred when it comes to the restoration of all things.

Maybe that is some of what Jesus tries to impart

to a thunderstruck, flabbergasted, flummoxed,

beer-paralyzed trio of people.

Do not be afraid, but get up.

This next bit, I have not asked the bishop for permission to do this,

but I am going to skip to the end of Matthew's Gospel.

I have a hunch he'd be okay with this, but...

Do you remember how that ends?

Where it ends?

A mountain.

And what does Jesus say after he has risen from the dead?

I pose that to you because, again, we are part of that disciple community.

Those people that Jesus spoke to then are standing for us.

Because it is here that Jesus says,

"Go and be the Gospel, and remember."

Remember, I am with you always.

[Breathing]

Between the last time that I was here to preach and now,

it is heartbreaking how many things have happened in our world

that I think have shifted it and have induced us to be afraid,

to be heartbroken.

I mean, the shootings this week in British Columbia,

the violence in Quebec,

certainly the deaths of people in Minneapolis, all of this,

I think maybe we can relate to the fear of the disciples

and that violence that seems to cling to everything.

Does Jesus have a word for us?

Get up as best we can.

Do not be afraid.

And to remember, he is with us always.

Amen.

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