

SUNDAY February 15, 2026

“Ready to be Transformed?”

Exodus 24:12-18 and Peter 1:16-21 Matthew 17:1-9

Many of you have gone to the cinema in recent weeks to see a movie. It is something many people like to do. The posted time for the movie to start is to ensure everyone is in their seats well before the main feature is presented. The main feature of course is the one that has been written up in news stories, periodicals, and whose stars have been on the late night or day time talk shows in order to promote their movie and tell a little bit about the story that is being shared. Whether the movie is an adventure, a love story or even horror- each movie that is a feature movie is usually shown after that one slide is presented on the big screen: the feature presentation. What is presented before this movie is what we call previews of upcoming attractions. Or movies that will soon hit the big screen because they are not yet released, still in post- production or even in general planning states. These are the previews. And often prior to the Feature presentation there might be 4-5 clips of these movies. Sometimes one remembers what these previews are about because you see the same clips in other visual media prior to the release. But many times the previews help to gauge how an audience might respond to it when it is fully released.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday and in many ways it is the preview of coming attractions with regard to what we will experience in the weeks to come--during the seasons of Lent and Easter. And what these stories of Jesus will mean to us as we look to be ‘Grounded and Growing’ in Lent and rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection during Easter. But just why is this story of Jesus’ hike up the mountain with 3 of his friends so significant? Maybe we need to look at the first preview of the importance of this hike by focusing on our reading from Exodus 24.

This is a story from the Old Testament which has Moses being invited up to the side of the mountain by God. There he is to wait as God will give him tablets of stone with the law and the commandments written on them. These laws and commandments will enable Moses to instruct the people who have been wandering the desert for many years and are in need of answers in how to live as God wills. So Moses and Joshua go up the side of the mountain and leave Aaron and Hur in charge. As Moses goes up a cloud covers the mountain. The ‘glory of the Lord’ settles on Mount Sinai and the cloud covers the mountain for 6 days. On the 7th day Moses is called out of the cloud. From below the people saw God’s glory but it appeared like a devouring fire. Moses stayed up on the mountainside for 40 days and nights. A long time! But what do we note about this story? Moses goes with Joshua who is told to wait for him. Moses is enveloped in a cloud; he experiences ‘the glory of God’ and he is there for a long time.

But what is this 'glory of God?' It is the presence of God among His people, often accompanied by fire or clouds. It is a part of God's character- which is important, valued and honourable. It is radiance and splendor and describes the radiant, shining light associated with the divine, as seen in Christ's resurrection. It is also the purpose of Creation; that is people are designed to reflect and glorify God, with the ultimate goal being to recognize and praise His worth. And in some circumstances the glory of God refers to the eternal state of being in God's full presence, that is heaven.

For Moses, the glory of God was seen in his face and hands. This was especially true after Moses had made a second trip up the mountain to see God's glory to get a second set of tablets. His face was shining and when Aaron saw him, they were afraid to draw close to him.

Have you ever experienced God's glory? That is have you ever had a time you have felt the Spirit of God move within you so much so that you radiate God's presence? That you have had a mountain top experience without hiking? But you knew that you had experienced God like never before and you knew then and there that you could not be as you were before? This is experiencing the glory of God!

The next preview takes place hundreds of years later when Jesus has been teaching and healing people for a while. He decides to take Peter, James and John on a hike up a mountain. They climb up the mountainside and they can see the valley below. They are probably hot and tired and then suddenly Jesus transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white. They then look again and there with Jesus is Moss and Elijah chatting away. Then Peter, not really knowing what to say, "Lord it is good for us to be here. If you wish I will make three dwellings -one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He didn't know what to do or say-- but it seemed he wanted to capture the moment with Moses and Elijah and Jesus together. Peter is in the presence of Moses- the great rescuer of God's people who received God's laws. And Elijah-- the prophet who also had a mountain top conversation with God and called down fire. He is lost in thought as he witnesses Elijah, Moses and Jesus talking together.

But as he was talking, a cloud overshadowed them and then a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved with him, I am well pleased: listen to him!" Peter, James and John heard the voice, fell flat on the ground out of fear. They knew it was the voice of God speaking to them but what were they to do?

Then they hear a familiar voice- Don't be afraid; they look up and see Jesus as they had known him! Jesus is the Son of God and they have heard this message from God. Yes God spoke similar words at Jesus' baptism, but it is in this moment that Jesus is real to them as God's Son.

Then Jesus says, ok, it's time to go down the mountain. So they start their hike down when Jesus says, "O by the way, don't tell anyone about what took place until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." One can only imagine all the questions the disciples want to ask Jesus, what do you mean- dead raised to life? Who is going to kill the Son of God? Why you? Why? How? When? Jesus could have said to the Father- Ok these fellows know who I am- I'm ready to come back to you. They can tell the story of who I am and what I have been teaching. But no, Jesus knows that his life on earth will end in death. If he had gone to heaven directly from that mountainside he would have gone alone. But he turned around and walked away from 'the glory of God' came down and did so with people in his mind and heart- people who needed a Saviour from sin.

Jesus shone brightly that day on the side of the mountain and returned to the valley below with his closest friends in order to fulfill his mission: to save us from sin and give to us the gift and promise of eternal life.

This preview of the main event took place on the side of a mountain and shows to us that Jesus' glory is reflective of God the Father. As we proceed into the wilderness experience of Lent we will wonder about whether we will be strong enough to make our way to celebrate the joy of Palm Sunday and his triumphal entry. We will wonder about how we might experience what he will experience as he suffers and dies. But because we are an Easter people, we will experience the Glory of God once again. The preview is transfiguration; the main presentation is yet to unfold. But the question for each of us is this: are we willing to walk the Lenten path as we search for what it means to be grounded in God's love? And are we willing to open our hearts so that we might experience God's glory even before we celebrate the Main Event or Big Day or simply what we know as Resurrection Sunday?

Jesus and his three friends descend from the mountain and these 3 friends know that something has definitely changed within them. They know truly know not just believe a little bit, but truly know that Jesus IS the Son of God. They are not going to be carrying the weight of the cross that Jesus will endure. But neither are we meant to do this except only if we see Christ's glory. As we consider who reigns we are reminded that Jesus shines like the sun, he is alive with light and our God reigns. There is nothing in this world that will take us away from God's glory but we must see the Preview and own it and experience it for ourselves. We must see also that as we walk with Jesus, our story will also end in glory-- God's glory! This is our challenge as we prepare to walk through Lent, Holy Week and look to Easter glory as the fulfillment of God's plan for His people- that Christ lives, will die and will rise again. This is our faith and our hope. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PRAYER

Wonderful God, we pray that you would lead us to the top of that mountain where we might be dazzled by your Light. Lift us up to what is Divine and fill us with sheer delight so that what is numinous and ethereal will be grounded and real. We pray this O God for ourselves, for one another, and for the worlds in which we live in. Hear now these prayers from our hearts as we seek to be radiant because of the light of Christ. Amen.