

He Didn't Want to Leave
Luke 9:28-36 – March 2, 2025 – Holy Cross, Moline

I like vacation. I grew up in Milan, on hill. 1968, summer, go down the hill to Bickle Ford, drive away in maroon 4-door LTD w/black vinyl top. It was our first car with A/C, next day off to Mt. Rushmore. Merrimac Caverns, St. Louis, Ozarks, Tennessee, East Coast, but not D.C, and never Chicago. Chicago was scary. I like vacation. Our children grew up taking regular vacations.

Staycation generally doesn't work for Pastors. First congregation, parsonage right next to the church, had to get out of town. We had to leave town on my day off. So for us, vacation always meant travelling, and I like to travel. Sometimes, you travel to place, and you don't want to leave. Ever been in a place, not want to leave. Ever been on vacation, and you didn't want it to end?

About 10 years ago, we were in San Antonio in December. Here, that particular December, it was December. In San Antonio, it was nice. Last day we scored some bicycles, riding bikes along mission trail, through neighborhood, got some lunch, checked the weather here, let's ride a little more, but not miss flight. We didn't want to leave. Has that ever happened to you?

It happened to Peter, once, up on a mountain. He didn't want to leave.

On this Transfiguration Sunday, we find ourselves at the end of the Epiphany Season, Lent staring us in the face. We began this season – it means “manifest” = Jesus is made “manifest” = revealed to be the Son of God. Father revealed that w/words at Baptism **“this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** He revealed self as God = Look, He can do miracles. I can't. You can't.

The First miracle – it happened on a Tuesday – was done at a wedding in Cana. Niece got married last fall; they ran out of rice. What do you do if you run out of rice? You don't run out of wine. And yet, that wedding had run out of wine. When His mother – she knew He could solve problem – asked Him to do something, he declined. But like I did/do w/children, “no – well, okay”.

He heals disease – what disease you healing? What have you got? One time, He ran an assembly line of healings, sick people in, healed people out, until dawn broke. He cast out demons. He commanded the wind and the rain. He produced a lot of food out of little. All these and more revealed – manifest He has power over disease, Satan, nature, gives abundance of sustenance.

He is God. I can't do those things. You can't do those things. He can, because He is God.

Today, bookending the Epiphany Season, on mountain, same voice, same words **“this is My Son”**

We like to watch TV. When Milton Norman Minow, Chair of the FCC, in a 1961 speech called television “a vast wasteland,” he was not wrong. There's a lot out there, and I have a system, and I watch TV for entertainment and for work. The end of a great series is always bittersweet. We liked the show, brought lot entertainment – and work – but we don't want it to end – to leave.

That was Peter, up on that mountain, he didn't want to leave, and who can blame him?

When Jesus called the Twelve – He personally chose each of them to carry on His work after He was gone, I beg your pardon, He never promised them a rose garden. I stopped whining long ago about how hard it is to be a Pastor. Compared to what? He told them that it was going to be a hard life – basically, observe and see what happens to me – that's what's going to happen to you.

And you laymen, observe as well. Right before this trip up the Mount of Transfiguration, He had told **“the disciples”** = Christians that (MT) **“necessary that He go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from (your church leaders) and be killed.”** Necessary – Bad thing has to happen before a good thing to follow **“and on the third day be raised”** 3X – 1. No, 2. Troubled, 3. I guess...

He said that, then right before He took 3/12 Apostles with Him up the mountain, He told them all **“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** Cross – instrument of death by torture, take that up, and carry it with you every day. **“For whoever would save his life would lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”**

One time, a man said that even if none of this is true, living the Christian life is a better life than any other kind of life, right, Pastor? Tell that to Paul and the Twelve, all of whom – see what happened to Jesus? Tell that to Christians in Iraq and Nigeria et al, who suffer and face death every day – persecution – just because of their religion. Nor do I complain about how hard be...

The Son was present at Creation, **“In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** He was there, along with Father and Holy Spirit, in six days creating light, then water and dry land – I think He's going somewhere with this – now plants with seeds, very sustainable – food, then animals, and final His best work **“in own image”** man, to enjoy, rule...

On the 7th Day – Saturday – Sabbath – God rested, and that's where the 7 day week comes from. Jesus likes vacation. Likes day off. Several times in NT, we find Him *trying* to get away from the crowds, but they always seek Him out, and they always manage to find Him. It's why I stopped telling people – except my sister – where we were going vacation – told who call.

Not His first mountain. His first trip up a mountain, He is with Satan, who bade Him look around, and I will give you all of this – all you have to do is worship me. Deal breaker. Later, He goes up mountain – I think He was culling the herd – to preach Sermon on the Mount. Those who made easy walk were told that we are “salt” and “light” and other nice things by Him.

Oh, and you are going to be **“reviled and persecuted”** but let your light shine regardless.

“Now about eight days after these sayings (take up your cross, and the like) He took with Him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” Not all Christians, not all Twelve, but three – happens several times. Why? Sometimes, overcomplicate things. John makes sure to tell us at the end of his Gospel that there's more to true story of Jesus – “all books....”

Same John, in same book, makes sure to tell us on Easter Sunday He and Peter raced to tomb, I won, and no, I did not have a head start. John also found space – it's his book – to tell us that he is “the disciple Jesus loved” = filios = the BFF of Jesus. So you have to take BFF John, and if you're going to take John, have to take twin James, and Peter, have take Peter because easier than... why.

Lk “**And as He was praying, the appearance of His countenance was altered (He was transfigured) and His raiment became dazzling white.**” Mt “**His face shone like the Sun**” Mk, transfigured “**and His clothing became dazzling white,**” then what's this? He begins to see dead people. Moses – God showed him promised land, could not enter “died” God buried him.

Moses was there, on mountain, and look, there's Elijah, who never actually died – He was carried to heaven in fiery chariot – he's back on earth, on Mountain, with Jesus who stands with them transfigured, and they – Moses and Elijah – “**who appeared in glory,**” and what do you mean by that? Were Moses and Elijah transfigured as well? Probably not, but “**in glory**” is not nothing.

Peter doesn't want to leave. You know the feeling – to be in time and place don't want to leave. If Mt. Rushmore came to life, if Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt were standing here, that would be pretty cool, and I – for one – would want to pick their brains. For how long? Luke fly on wall says they “**spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem**”

Moses and Elijah both knew about the coming Messiah = the Christ = God come into the world to save all people – including them – from their sin. They knew what Isaiah later proclaimed as the “suffering servant.” When they observed tabernacle – Temple sacrifices, with knowing eye they saw that sacrificing animals was only precursor to the perfect sacrifice made by spotless lamb God.

Those heavy hitters knew that this glowing man was that man, and it was with great joy that they “**spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem**” = salvation of man.

Peter talks about building “tents” or “tabernacles” = temporary structure. Our first tent – I was student at CTC, married, took our S & H green stamps, went out where every east-west road with numbers 80 + meet, add Manheim, got two sleeping bags, bought an orange pup tent. Gave it to a guy passing through Pittsburg, camping “down by the river” no river. Came back next year...

Occam's razor = simplest. If you stow it, you might get Peter wanting to set up tents to observe Booths, which did involve “tents,” but wrong time, not right place. I brought my water with me this morning. Started in Colorado – dry – I drink my own water (Davenport). I see Pastor Anderson brought water with him this morning. That must mean we're having a Baptism, talking.

Peter wants to put up temporary shelter – bring materials, or make do? Most Christians, given their druthers, would rather stay on glowing mountaintop, avoid the cross down on the plain.

Jesus did not rebuke Peter for wanting to stay there. He did not even respond to suggestion – if *He* had *His* druthers... As for Peter, as soon as heard those words about tents come out his mouth, wanted take back, “**not knowing what he said**” Montgomery, AL. Awkward. “**As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.**”

It was very cool up on the mountain, and then it was scary, “**And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, My Chosen, Listen to Him,’**” and then it was done, “**And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone,**” and what now. Now, it’s time for them to leave. What happens on the mountain, stays on mountain. At least for now. Then, all over, Peter talked.

When I used to hear Pastor Skov at St. Matthew in Milan talk about the miracles of Jesus, I remember thinking, wish I could have been there to see. Easier to believe. First time I heard a preacher proclaim from a Lutheran Pulpit that our “thing” in LCMS is to teach Word God correctly – only ones. When I heard those words from that preacher I thought, “that’s a little bit edgy.”

Peter talked, and in 2 Peter, spoke of his *seeing* the Transfiguration with his own eyes “**we were eyewitnesses of His majesty**” and *hearing* the voice of God with his own ear “**the voice borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son,’**” compares that with what he/we/you hear from Bible, “**And we have the prophetic word (Bible) made more certain.**” Comparative.

You will do well to pay attention to this (Word) as to a light shining in a dark place” I said what I said a couple of years ago from pulpit at Immanuel, GM, sounded a bit edgy, but....

Many churches today, *their thing* is to do whatever you have to do to get people in the door. Keep it light, uplifting, fun, and whatever you do, don’t talk about that guy on the cross. And don’t talk about sin. They are not thinking about teaching the Bible correctly. Nor are the multitude of churches (thing/niche) who teach actual opposite what Bible teaches – forsaking basic Christianity.

Basic Christianity – marriage is between one man and one woman. Ya, but that’s an OT thing, isn’t it? No, actually read what Paul says in Romans 1, in NT. Ya, but I only care about things in red letters = words of Jesus. Actually “exception clause” – Matthew, anything except one man, one woman, not marriage. Ya, but – those people give lip service to Bible. Where that get you?

Teaching the Bible “**that word more certain**” correctly, that is our niche/thing, isn’t it? It started with Moses, and Jesus, and Peter’s “**word more certain.**” It continued with Martin Luther, who looked at his Bible and noted some discrepancies between that and the current teaching of the Church. Holding fast to clear teachings of Bible reason why Saxons et al left, here – LCMS.

Up on the mountain, down on the plain, often with fear and trembling, until we reach the end. Baptized into God/Man Jesus for our full salvation, who comes down to the plain here and now. We look forward to heaven, on the last day to the new creation, new and different heaven and earth – and better. That will be a place where you never want to leave – and you won’t have to. Amen.