

May what is spoken here and what is heard be spoken and heard in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every time I hear the story of the Transfiguration, our Gospel story today, from Luke, I really do wonder what Luke might have been smoking when he wrote it. Mind you, it is one of my favorite stories, and I don't really think that Luke was actually smoking anything, besides which, Luke is not the only Gospel writer who recounts the event. Mark and Matthew also include this particular story.

So the story is probably true – the event we just heard about probably happened, but it certainly is strange, isn't it? But think about it for a minute. How weird is it that four young men, Jesus, Peter, James, and John, went to the top of a mountain, and while they were up there, the clothes that Jesus was wearing suddenly turned bright white.

And, if that isn't strange enough, the next thing that happens is that Elijah and Moses – two guys who had been dead for hundreds of years – suddenly show up out of nowhere, and start having a conversation with Jesus.

And, in reaction to what happened, Peter came up with what I consider one of the strangest ideas in all of Holy Scripture. When they make this scenario into a movie, I hope Jim Nabors is cast as St. Peter, and that he will deliver Peter's statement in his best Gomer Pyle voice: 'Well Gollleeee, let's build us three dwellings: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Gollleeee.'

And then (back to the Gospel story), after that silly sounding comment from St. Peter, some sort of cloud came over them all, and out of the cloud came a loud voice speaking to them - presumably in their own language, since they seemed to have understood what the Voice said. And then Elijah and Moses disappeared, and Jesus told Peter and James and John not to tell anyone what had just happened, at least not right away.

So, we're all agreed that the story is really strange, right? But I suspect that the story is strange, not just to leave us shaking our heads, but rather because God, through the story is trying to tell us something. And one thing I believe that God is trying to say is that no matter what our circumstances may be at any given moment in our lives, no matter how strange or worrisome they may seem, we can – and must – always have hope, because we are never beyond the reach of God's love.

Soon after this strange event, Jesus had to walk the long and miserable road to his own death. And his disciples had to watch, as the execution happened. What a miserable time that must have been for them. But what surely helped sustain the disciples during that awful time was the fact that on that mountain top, and in that weird experience that we know as the Transfiguration, they had also seen Jesus in his glory.

They could endure the tough time, because they had had a glimpse of God's plan for salvation. And I believe that message was intended not only for Peter and James and John, but for us, too. We too face challenging times. And because we face challenging times, we too need hope.

Just turn on the news any night of the week and be confronted by crime, sickness, terrorism, and natural disasters. Even the reality of changing times – like transitions in parishes – can feel disruptive and frightening. We too need the reassurance that we *can* always be hopeful. So we too need the Transfiguration – strange as it may seem – because it offers us hope, even in the most trying of times.

We – none of us – know exactly what the future holds, but we do know that we can be hopeful - even in the trenches of life – because Jesus has been there, and Jesus triumphed over the absolute worst thing that could happen. The story of the Transfiguration is weird, to be sure, and we probably don't understand it in all its fullness. But we don't have to.

The life, the love, and the labor of Jesus don't depend on *our* understanding. Instead, they offer us a reason for the hope that is in us. Because the One who was transfigured wasn't destroyed, even by death, and He died – and rose – to insure that nothing, ultimately, will destroy us, either. Thanks be to God for the One who was transfigured. Amen.

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