

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

March 3, 2019  
Transfiguration / Last Epiphany C

The readings this week:

- Exodus 34:29-35 ◦ Psalm 99
- 2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2 ◦ Luke 9:28-36, (37-43)



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## No Ordinary Mountaintop

Mount Tabor is the site said to be the location of the Transfiguration of Jesus. I have only seen Mount Tabor from a distance, from the position of other sites throughout the Holy Land. On the one hand, it is a mountain like any other in the landscape of this section of the world. It is a diverse topography marked by hills and valleys, fertile plains and arid desert, mountains and wildernesses. On the other hand, Mount Tabor is extraordinary. And then you remember that such is their nature -- mountains, that is. I grew up in California, with relatives in Washington State, and did my internship in Washington. Talk about mountains -- Rainier, Hood, Shasta, Baker, St. Helen's. Magnificent. Regal. Snowcapped. I remember very well visiting my grandparents only weeks after the eruption of Mount St. Helen's. Ash was everywhere, even though they were 60 miles south.

And so mountains are particular and poignant. The rise up from the plains of our lives to invite majesty and awe; wonder and fear; to call to mind the heights of the heavens and yet the reality of the valleys below.

Mountains have a way of disarming you. There are those who choose to conquer certain mountains, whether an item on the bucket list or simply a quest that meets a certain life need, want, desire. The truth is, mountains can kill you. And perhaps there is a certain truth to that when it comes to the Transfiguration.

Mountains have a way of disrupting you. They change your framework, your way of seeing the world. Mountains don't lie. Mountains have a way of transforming you.

This may be our clue to the Transfiguration from Luke -- that mountaintops provide moments for seeing reality and not making up theology. That mountaintops create spaces for perspective instead of justifying preconceived perceptions. That mountaintops truly change your way of interpreting or making sense of the world. One cannot escape some sort of draw toward the mountains of the Holy Land. They force you to make sense of your confession of faith that is outside any predetermined, isolated, and limited opinion.

As permanent as mountains appear to be, mountaintops are fleeting. Mountaintops are temporary. Mountaintops are momentary. Yet, we so long for them to be lasting. Why is that? We are not strangers to this quest: we want the

mountaintops to last, to make a difference, to mean something. Why? Because we long for understanding. We long for a viewpoint that others do not have. We long for perspective that results in the very true possibility that we can make sense of the world -- not only for ourselves, but for those who frequent our pews, who visit our offices, with whom we accompany on moments of life that are more complicated than we could have ever imagined.

We long for mountaintops. We need them. But what is different in Luke's Transfiguration account is the radical revelation of a mountaintop experience that is then interrupted by the urgency of reality. Luke reminds us that our proclamation of the good news will elicit real need. Are we ready to handle that? Are we ready to embody that? Are we ready to preach that? There's a lot of terrain between hills and valleys, mountaintop experiences and the trenches of real life, the highs and lows of human existence.

We cannot justify, rationalize, or make sense of this event in Jesus' life. It just has to be what it is: a revelation of Jesus. A revelation of who Jesus is. A revelation of relationship.

The Transfiguration of Jesus has to be a moment of revelation that extends and exists beyond the mountaintop experience. Otherwise, it will only justify glory, power, and privilege. And so, our call has to be grounded in the ways in which God grounds God's very self in transfiguration. God has chosen to reveal God's self in ways that are breathtaking, miraculous, wondrous. Why? Because we have a tendency to tame God, to think that God will adjust to our many needs, to think that God will conform to our ideals.

When the Transfiguration becomes a sort of embarrassment for the church, an example of the ways in which the church hopes for glory, an argument for Jesus' divine identity, a chance to wax nostalgic about mountaintop experiences, well then, it will cease to matter. Make it matter by accepting it for what it is -- no ordinary mountaintop experience.

~ an excerpt by Karoline Lewis, edited [Dear Working Preacher](#)



# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: [Exodus 34:29-35](#)

How did spending an extended period of time in the Lord's presents affect Moses' appearance? Can you describe any changes that have happened in your life as a result of spending time with the Lord? Think of people you would describe as 'radiant' in their faith. What specifically is it about them that would make you describe them in this way? What did Moses do about his radiant, shining face? What does 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 encourage believers today to do? [Trinity Church](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 99](#)

How does David try to persuade God to help him in this psalm? What are the mighty works of God mentioned in this psalm? What does David commit to do in verses 11 and 12? What are some examples of visible signs of God's goodness, in the history of the people of God, that put the enemy to shame? Where do we get courage for the battle? Do we have that undivided heart that lives in the fear of God? How do we know that we are "on God's side?" [Generations](#)



Believe me, I know how tempting it is to remain inside this blessing, to linger where everything is dazzling and clear.

We could build walls around this blessing, put a roof over it. We could bring in a table, chairs, have the most amazing meals. We could make a home. We could stay.

But this blessing is built for leaving. This blessing is made for coming down the mountain. This blessing wants to be in motion, to travel with you as you return to level ground.

It will seem strange how quiet this blessing becomes when it returns to earth. It is not shy. It is not afraid.

It simply knows how to bide its time, to watch and wait, to discern and pray until the moment comes when it will reveal everything it knows, when it will shine forth with all that it has seen, when it will dazzle with the unforgettable light you have carried all this way.

~ Jan Richardson from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons, [Painted Prayer Book](#)

## 3rd Reading: [2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2](#)

What was the purpose for the veil that Moses wore at Sinai? What happened to that veil? What does it now do? What condition exists when the Spirit of the Lord is present? How do we under the new covenant behold the glory of God? How did Paul describe his ministry? What do people read when they observe your life? How does the New Testament experience compare to that of the Old Testament? [Doing Good](#)

## 4th Reading: [Luke 9:28-36, \(37-43\)](#)

What three levels of significance does the Transfiguration of Jesus have in Luke? How does Luke blend the various shades of meanings of the word exodus (departure) in his account of the Transfiguration? What are the Old Testament echoes in this passage? Why is the Father's injunction, "Listen to him", significant for those who heard it? Why would Jesus have told his followers to "deny" themselves, and what do you think they understood him to mean? What would the expression "taking up one's cross" have meant? How often did Jesus say that this should be done? What do these expressions mean to you? [Ignatius Press Promotions](#)

### Praying Toward Sunday

Compassionate God, we recognize that our world is a broken place, hurt by poverty, famine and disease. We admit that sometimes we make the world a broken place, tolerating prejudice, conflict and self-interest. We confess that our hearts also suffer with anger, resentment and jealousy. Renew us in Your love, O God, and heal us with the comfort of Your abundant love. Awaken us to the role we can play in healing Your creation. Strengthen us through the power of the Holy Spirit to hear Your word and move forward in faith. Amen.

~ Gill Le Fevre