

Transfiguration Sunday B/February 11, 2018

2 Kings 2:1-12; Mark 9:2-9;

Rev. Joel M. Krueger

"Hiking with Jesus"

I want to take you on a little journey this morning.

So, close your eyes, sit back and relax.

Take a few deep breaths and try to let go of any thoughts or anything that is in your head right now - just let it all go - and clear your mind.

Imagine that you are a follower of Jesus.

You have left everything to be his disciple, to learn from him, to be part of his movement, to seek a closer relationship with God.

How does it feel to be part of his band of disciples? Are you excited? Fearful? Do you feel you fit in with the group?

Now think of your own life, can you remember when you first thought of yourself as a follower of Christ? Perhaps you were very young. Perhaps you were older. What was it like to understand yourself as a Christian?

Imagine again that you have been with Jesus and his followers. You have seen many things. You have heard Jesus preach in the synagogues. You have listened as he has told parables. You have witnessed him perform miracles of healing: opening the eyes of blind men, healing someone who was paralyzed, curing an old woman who touched his robe. He has just brought a little girl from death to life.

Who is this man? How do you feel about him? What is it like to be with him?

What is it like to be with him now?

Back with Jesus now. He invites you and a couple others to go with him for a time of prayer together. You are going up on a mountain. You will have to do some hiking to get there.

You are going to pray with Jesus. He has asked you directly. Are you excited to be invited by him? Are you excited to climb that mountain?

Have you ever felt like Jesus himself has invited you to be with him? Have you ever felt your faith has "called" you to do something special, to take on some ministry, or to do something for another person? What was it like to feel "called?"

Now you are climbing. The trail starts off easy enough. It is a dirt trail. There are some rocks to step over. It isn't too steep. You are all together, though no one is talking much. Then it begins to get steeper. There are fewer tall trees than before. The rocks are bigger now. You have to take bigger steps to get to the next point on the trail. Once in awhile you need the help of those in front and behind you, to get up a rocky knoll. You help others too, holding out your hand, grasping theirs, you struggle, but are able to pull them up to the next level.

What is the climb like for you?

In your own life, have you ever needed help from someone else? How did it feel? How does it feel when you help another person? Have you ever helped someone get to the next level, teach them something, or help them through a difficult time? How did that make you feel?

On the mountain, Jesus continues to lead. It is difficult climbing now. It is hot. You are thirsty. You are tired. Jesus keeps climbing. He's like a goat! You look for him now but all you see is the rocky trail and the few bushes that cover the barren landscape. It is too steep for you to see very far ahead, and Jesus seems nowhere in sight. At one point you slip, you lose your grasp on the ledge above you and begin to fall back. Your friends reach up and hold you from behind but you are still precariously hanging in mid air, finding nothing to grab onto. Suddenly Jesus is there to grab your hand and pull you up. You catch your breath. Collect yourself. And help the others up the steep ledge.

What was it like when Jesus was out of sight and you were struggling?

In your own life, have there been times when you felt God had left you? How did you feel? Did that experience impact your faith? Have there been instances in your life when it seemed God suddenly intervened for you, helped you in a crisis situation?

You have reached the summit! You are tired from the long climb but you feel exhilarated by the view from the mountain top. You can see for miles. You and your friends congratulate one another on your accomplishment. You turn, looking for Jesus, and your eyes are stabbed with a blinding light. You squint to see what it is. You feel light-headed, unsteady, and need to get down on your hands and knees, afraid you might fall over. You realize the light is Jesus. It surrounds him, comes out of him. Two other figures seem to emanate from that light. Somehow you know they are Moses and Elijah, great figures of your faith. You are awestruck, overcome by this incredible sight.

What are you thinking? Do you wonder if the altitude is affecting you? Do you question your sanity? Or do you believe you have been visited by God?

Have you ever known a theophany of faith? An experience of the real presence of God? Have you ever sensed the presence of the great forebears of your faith, of saints or ancestors who appear in times of distress or great need? As you sit in this sanctuary, do you ever sense the presence of those who have worshipped here over the past 200 years? How does that make you feel? Does the thought of such things seem ludicrous or intriguing?

It is time to come back down the mountain. The climb down is no easier. And you are exhausted. You help one another down the rocks, finding your footing, holding one another up. No one speaks. Finally, before you reach foot of the mountain, Jesus instructs all of you not to tell anyone of your experience, until after he has risen from the dead.

What are you feeling, coming down? Did you want to stay up there at the summit? Are you anxious to get back to level ground? Do you have a different feeling about this man Jesus now? Do you question what he means about "rising from the dead?"

Have you ever had a "mountain-top experience" in your faith life, when you felt renewed, different, empowered, and then had to return home? How did you feel? Sorry to have to leave? Anxious to tell your friends and family? What insight did the experience give you?

Okay, you can come back now. We have covered a lot of ground on this hike. Open your eyes, take a few deep breaths and look around and remember where you are. I invite you to take some time to think about this hike we just took with Jesus and to share some of your thoughts and feelings with each other later after church or later in the week. For just as surely as those three disciples would have felt a need to talk to one another about what they had experienced at the Transfiguration, so too should we share with one another our own walk of faith. Amen.

