

Transfiguration Sunday
Sermon text: Luke 9:28-36
Date preached: February 7, 2016
Sermon Title: What goes up must come down.

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

I've been to the mountain top after a long hike upward. The scenery is breathtakingly beautiful. There is a peace and tranquility in reaching the top. Many people speak of the view from the parking lot with that same sense of peace.

I've been in huge gatherings of youth ranging from 20,000 to 35,000 from across the nation singing, praising God, sitting in the chairs hearing sermons and delighting in the small sampling of the church that is much larger than any one congregation.

I've been in conferences and convocations fired up by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is easy to come away excited, renewed and refreshed.

Maybe you have had similar experiences of great joy, powerful moments of blessings, or beholding the awesomeness of God's beauty while on the vacation of a lifetime.

Yet in each case the time comes to return. We never get to take up permanent residence on the mountaintops.

It was on the mountaintop that Moses prayed to God. On the top of Mount Sinai he received the 10 Commandments. Yet he would descend only to see the mess that had become God's people. While Moses was away the Israelites made a golden calf to worship. Deuteronomy 9:16 records Moses as saying, "And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the Lord your God. You had made yourselves a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the Lord had commanded you."

You see, when we come down off the mountain it is easy to get caught up in the routine. We may come back on fire only to have that dashed by the pain, brokenness, and turbulent sinful lives of our neighbors and our own.

Yet it is precisely in this mess that we are called to bear witness to Jesus Christ, the beloved, with whom God is well pleased. He had the greatest descent, coming down out of heaven.

He entered this wounded, hurting, pain-ridden world encountering violence and bloodshed. He entered in as a baby. Born of the Virgin Mary, descended from the lineage of King David, the very Word of God became flesh and lived among us.

He did not shy away from the Lepers as others did. He healed them. He did not throw stones as people were eager to do at the woman caught in adultery. In what the Pharisees thought was utter audaciousness he declared forgiveness a paralyzed man, a tax collector and even on the cross, and a crook who was getting his just punishment.

Jesus came down off the mountain to fulfill the plan of God to save us from our sins. He traveled the road that would lead to Jerusalem. He traveled a path that led to betrayal, abandonment, injustice, and the gashing wounds of the whip until finally he died on the cross.

Romans 5:5 reads, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” You and I are the ungodly ones, stained with inherited sin. He entered into our messed up, dirty lives, filled with prejudices, biases, and skeleton filled closets to set you and me free.

Jesus descended to the very pits of hell that as a result of his righteous faithfulness you may ascend to the mansion of God, filled with unimaginable beauty. There the church triumphant, our brothers and sisters in Christ who have preceded us, sing praises, pray on our behalf, and dine at the great wedding feast of victory.

You and I, the church militant are not on the mountain top. Rather it is the church's mission to encourage people along this journey of faith. It is to comfort the journeymen that even as we travel, as we get tangled in the snares of the evil one, as we get caught in the mess that is a manifestation of sin, Christ is with us.

From the valleys and rocky roads, twisting paths and impatient uncertainty, we are bid to follow our Lord. Even as it looks like our destination is death, we dare not loose heart.

Along the journey we are given glimpses of the Promised Land. As Peter, James and John saw briefly the appearance of what Jesus looks like in his glory, we too are given a glimpse of that glory. It comes in the waters of Holy Baptism as the body of Christ grows. The glimpse of heavenly glory comes

as the faithful are fed with bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus.

In faith we go forth throughout the areas of the world where we live and travel bringing water to the thirsty, providing bread to the hungry, visiting the sick, the elderly, helping the captive become free from abuse, binding up the brokenhearted, and in all things, bearing witness to our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. AMEN.