

Transfiguration C
Pastor Dave Wegner
Luke 9:28-36
March 3, 2019

**You can't read a novel or watch a movie
Without coming across the theme of transformation or change.**

**But one of my favorite film instances is from the 2000
"Remember the Titans" where Denzel Washington
Plays a high school football coach hired to lead the team
Into and through the school system's
Integration of black students into the white school.**

**I appreciate this movie's consideration of transformation and change
Because it reflects not on just one central character,
But rather on an entire community.**

**Students and their parents, coaches and their assistants,
The neighbors and supporters of the school
Even the coaches elementary aged daughters struggle
With transformed reality that is their lives.**

**I suspect many of us can remember times
When we experienced events or challenges
That prompted us to take a close look at our own growth,
Our assumptions, or biases, or traditions,
And perhaps experience,
Whether in or control of it or not,
Transformation and change.**

**It could be a change to our environment, our job,
Our neighborhood, our family structure, our congregation,
Our sense of spirituality, our very sense of faith itself.**

**Of course, we look back with perfect vision,
Seeing all the bumps in the road
And how we navigated the course as best we could.
Maybe we can clearly see a difference in ourselves
Before and after,
Or perhaps the results are somewhat cloudy, even still.**

**Remember the Titans ends with relationships built and restored,
With differences being set aside for the sake of the game,
But not without a tumultuous and violent road along the way.**

**Regardless of how it is that we emerge
From transformational experiences
It is most probable that there was some pain and challenge
Along the way.**

**Change tends to do that.
The body aches during growth spurts,
An organization tenses for a time under new leadership,
Glaciers rumble as global temperatures rise.**

**Jesus invites his closest disciples to the mountain top
To witness change:
And we with the whole story know that this episode
Is not simply about a change of clothes or ambient lighting.**

**For the Gospel author, thus begins the long journey to Jerusalem,
A change in messianic expectation,
A change in what the fulfillment of the glory of God
Actually looks like: not just dazzling lights
And ancient heroes upon a mountaintop,
But rather the striking darkness**

Of a rugged cross and rough-hewn tomb.
Yes, we know the whole story and how it doesn't end
On that dark Friday afternoon,
But all too often I still find myself and perhaps you do too
Wanting to suggest, like Peter, that we just pitch a tent
On that mountainside
And live in that resplendent glory forever.
To let the difficult, confusing, challenging, transformative
Thunderstorm just roll on by.

As well-intentioned as Peter might have been that day,
The Gospel authors quickly alert us that
He had no idea what he was talking about.

Because to climb into a tent and dwell only there
Is, by design, to shut out that which is outside.
To remove one's self from the environment
And anything that would challenge our self-made
Sense of security and peace.
To bury our heads in the sand and hope
That change doesn't rain on our parade.
To close our eyes and stop our ears while telling ourselves
That everything is just fine the way it is
And no thing or no one will tell me differently.

And as much as tents are meant to keep outside stuff outside,
They are just as good at trapping inside stuff inside.

In staking our claim in what we like or are comfortable with,
By turning in on ourselves and hiding from the radical,
Transformative power of the Transfiguration,
What gets trapped inside with us?

**Arrogance, stubbornness, selfishness, greed, control, authority?
In our attempt to keep change away,
 To keep from going back to the valley
 Where there might be shadows,
Have we doomed ourselves to a stagnant, stale, lifeless...life?**

**To our racing minds and trembling hearts
Comes a voice from the clouds
 No one in or outside a tent could have ignored,
A voice with words that connect this transformational,
 Transfiguring mountaintop moment
 To that which was begun by the Jordan riverside,
 “This is my Son, my Chosen...listen.”**

**Listen, witness, learn, follow, even back down the mountain path
 Into the places where shadows may yet fall
 Because it is through this one death on a cross
 That our deaths are transformed into life.**

**Jesus invites us to witness the heavens split open
 And the great light and power of God fill the world around us.**

**A light that is so bright, radiant, glorious, and powerful
 That darkness can't even begin to understand it,
 And our tent-like hiding places are torn to shreds.**

**The transfiguration of Jesus
 Becomes our own transfiguration by God's grace.**

**No longer are we bound to the fears and scarcity of the world,
 But given grace upon grace and gift upon gift
 To share with the world around us.**

**Abiding in Jesus is not standing still in faith and hope,
Abiding in Jesus is following him to the next town,
And the next and the next.**

**Abiding in Jesus is a life-long journey that
Promises growth, transformation, and change,
Even in the midst of challenge, disappointment, or pain.**

**We don't need to hole up on a mountaintop
To be near to Jesus in his glory and grace,
The incarnate God has made a dwelling place for us,
Among us. Around us. Through us. In us.**

**Our old self dies in baptismal waters,
Our fragile tents are dismantled, our fears relieved,
And we are raised up to live and dwell
As daughters and sons of God
Called to share the good news
Of a cross and a tomb that are empty!**

**We become a community of brothers and sisters
That supports and cares for one another,
That embraces our neighbors both near and far,
That puts forward resources to nurture young people,
That prays for ministry teams and boards,
And councils, and staff, and pastors, and bishops,
And prisoners, and the sick, and the dying,
And does all of these things out of
A deep and faithful trust that the goodness of God
Will never, ever fail.**

**This is what the transfiguring power of God does in our lives.
This is what Christ's dwelling with us does in our lives,
This is what people set free from the power of tents
Does in our lives.**

**And if you feel that there are still things holding you back,
Come this Wednesday and feel a cross traced upon your head.**

**Use this Lenten season as a time of prayer, reflection, and confession.
Come, even kicking and screaming if you must,
Dragging those tent pegs behind you.**

**Because we have been called out of our tents,
And into a life full of radiant, glorious,
Transformative, life-giving light.**