

Luke 9: 28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus* took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,* they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,* one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen;* listen to him!' ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he* shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' ⁴¹Jesus answered, 'You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.' ⁴²While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.'

This is the celebration of the transfiguration of Jesus. It is the moment before he sets his face towards Jerusalem. It is a moment of mystery – it is a disclosure that remains hidden. Something important is happening, but the disciples don't know what it is.

The disciples are, as usual for Luke, asleep at the switch. As in the Garden of Gethsemane, they miss the critical moments. The word used for sleep in the text is '*hupnos*' – it's where we get the word hypnosis. *Hupnos* can be physical sleep, or an absence of consciousness.

Moments happen – and we wake up in the middle of the moment, knowing that there have been significant words or actions, but not knowing what they were.

Moses and Elijah appear – the bringer of the law and the greatest of the prophets – and talk with Jesus about his leaving – 'exodo' in the text – his 'exodus.' The first exodus was an escape from slavery into freedom. This exodus is an embracing of the cost of freedom.

The first exodus was the call to become a people who would not live under oppression. This exodus shows the emptiness and final impotence of the forces of death and destruction. The first exodus was an act of trust that God would sustain a people who would embrace justice rather than hierarchy. The second exodus was an act of trust that God would sustain one who embraced his own betrayal and death rather than be controlled by the fears of shame and violence. Jesus saw his own death, and took it in as part of a whole life lived in trust.

Peter thinks he knows what's happening. His initial reaction is to place all three entities – Jesus and Elijah and Moses – into the booths of honor and celebration. The voice from the cloud rebukes him; 'THIS is my beloved; listen to him!' And the cloud disappears, leaving only Jesus and the disciples. Disclosure turns into mystery. Peter thought he knew; for the author of Luke, he did not know what he was saying.

In the next scene, the disciples who were waiting below have been unable to cast out a demon. Jesus makes the child whole, and delivers the child to his father. He bitterly complains of the 'faithless generation' of his disciples. Faithless. Not trusting. Not believing. Fearful. Frustrated. Not accepting.

The faithless generation is the generation that looks for an 'out' to their own death. The Pima tribe refers to the 'Ho-Ho-Kam' – the people that were – as the occupants of the dead cities of the Gila River. The Anasazi – the 'disappeared ones' – were the occupants of the cliff dwellings for centuries. Only their ruins were left by the time Europeans came on the scene. We know that civilizations come and go, but we cannot believe that will happen to us.

We find all kinds of reasons why it should not happen to us. "What will happen to the cause of freedom and justice if we go? Who will take care of our children, our pets?"

We have justified slavery, the trail of tears, the relocation of the Japanese-Americans, the use of nuclear weapons and pre-emptive war, lynchings and the support of assassination and dictatorships to protect 'our way of life.'

We murmur about 'global warming,' asteroid destruction, the end of fossil fuel, but we re-arrange the deck chairs on a sinking Titanic. We cannot expel the demons around us, for we have not faced ourselves. We seek to avoid our death rather than embrace it as part of our life. We fear what diminishes us, either physically or emotionally. And we expand ourselves into larger units to justify our fears. We aren't defending our own lives, but our loved ones, our families, our nation, our church, our God. But we must defend, for there are those who would do us harm. And we look for the harm they would do us rather than the needs they have or the gifts they bring.

In our refusal to face ourselves and our own death we find ourselves confronting demons – enemies who are 'out there.' We even use the word 'demonize' to describe ways that we distort those who disagree with us into horrible creatures. A faithless generation cannot cast out demons, for they invent them.

I have a problem with tall men. I feel small and insignificant alongside them. I am offended at their presence, and blame them for my reactions.

When Jesus makes whole, he restores us to relationships with one another. He gets us beyond our inventions of one another to a recognition of the unknownness, the mystery that we are. Instead of seeing tall men as domineering louts, brushing me aside by their very presence, I see individuals who I do not know or comprehend. I see mystery and journey and presence to explore.

The word of Jesus is not a word for our friends and against our enemies. It is a Word that stands between us and our friends, between us and our enemies, even between us and our selves and says, "This one is mystery."

"It isn't what you don't know that's dangerous; it's what you think you know that isn't so." We think we know ourselves, and we think we know others. We think we have captured their strengths and their weaknesses – and that we can fit them into booths. Or boxes.

"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." *'Aukouete'*. Give audience to him. Audience – audio – auditor – hearer. Listener. Hear him. Don't invent. Don't assume. Listen.

We do some things in worship to try to re-member, re-create, re-do this. We rehearse the known and unknown brokenness and belovedness we are in confession and absolution. Then we pass the peace. When we pass the peace, we aren't saying 'good morning' to 'good old Wayne' who we've known for fifteen years. We are saying that God's peace is with the mystery of unknown Wayne. Forgiven Wayne. Made Whole Wayne. Wayne whose life is beloved, forgiven, and open to the future with his Parkinson's and his

humor and his anger. They are all his; he isn't Parkinson's, he isn't humor, he isn't anger. He is Unknown Mystery Wayne.

And it's God's peace that is with him.

It isn't 'gee, I'm glad to see you hear this morning!' It isn't 'you're being here makes me think that our club isn't dying so I'm relieved you showed up again.' It is the peace of the transfigured one who walks to his death and heals in the midst of it. It is the peace of Christ that is with you and with me.

You have to imagine the people who irritate you the most, the columnist or radio talk show host who most gets under your skin. You have to imagine the ones who left you alone, either by dying or abandoning you. And you have to imagine the ones caught in famine, in refugee camps, in the desert crossing the border. You have to imagine the police, the Border Patrol, the soldiers and the sailors. We're here, but we're also stand-ins for them as we give and receive the peace of Christ.

So we stop sleeping – stop being hypnotized. We wake up. We look back at the transfigured one. All the signs were there. The shining robes, the mountain top, Moses and Elijah, the talking Cloud. And we are gifted with the faith and courage to proclaim the peace of this one. These are the words that begin our action and our care. These are the words that begin our casting out of demons, of healing, of rebuilding communities and lives. These are not, cannot be easy words.

The peace of Christ be with you, and with your Spirit. Amen.