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Feb

## Glory Revealed

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TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY, YEAR A

The Transfiguration is a foretaste of the glory of Resurrection, a revelation of Jesus' divinity that has been hidden, yet is no less real.

### REFERENCES

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 2

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

### COLORS

Green

We hate to wait. There was a commercial many years ago with that tag line. I don't remember what it was for. But the line stuck with me. Because it is true. We hate to wait. As a culture, as a people, as individuals, we hate to wait. Patience may be on a list of virtues somewhere, but it isn't one we cling to very well. At least most of us. Maybe because it is forced upon us so often, this need to wait; that's why we chafe so much. And we aren't the first ones.

A quick glance through the Exodus text will convince you that there is nothing rushed about this encounter with the glory of God. God says to Moses, "Come and wait." Moses says to the elders, "Wait until we come back." Moses is six days in the cloud before God speaks. Then Moses is forty days and forty nights on the mountain while everyone waits. And you know what kind of trouble comes about because of the waiting.

Then Matthew starts our Gospel text with the words “six days later.” Six days? After what? After Peter is called Satan. Six days after Jesus told him that he was hindering the progress toward the kingdom. Those had to be the longest six days in Pete’s life, at least so far. It’s about to get worse, but that’s a story for another time. For now, he’s just hanging out, dodging the glances from the rest of them, who alternate between accusing him and glad it wasn’t them. A long time to wait.

Then Jesus calls him out, and he isn’t sure whether he is in for another chewing out. Instead, it is a field trip. Up a mountain they go, the inner circle – or the remedial class. It depends on how you look at it. What happens up there defies description. Words escape any thinking mind. So, Peter speaks. Sigh. Is he making up for what happened six days ago? Who knows. Maybe he is just filling an awkward silence with his own inappropriate thoughts. But this time, he doesn’t get called out. He just gets overlooked. Or over spoken, perhaps, as another voice resounds from the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matthew 17:5 NRSV.)

Worth waiting for? That’s the question, isn’t it? It seems like it was worth the wait for the disciples. They were transfixed by the experience. Of course, afterward, they were told to wait some more. They probably appreciated it, since it meant that they didn’t have to try to explain it to anyone. They could dwell on it, reflect for a while. and maybe something would occur to them. Maybe they would begin to grasp that glory revealed is sometimes more subtle than we realize.

You can’t help but notice the clouds in both of these texts. Clouds speak of presence, but also of obscurity. They saw but didn’t really see. How often does that happen to us? Just when we think we’ve caught sight of something, or just when we think we have figured something out, a doubt rises. A question gets asked that we can’t answer. A circumstance happens that weighs heavily upon us. There is too much that obscures our vision. There is too much that makes us hesitant, uncertain. We don’t see as clearly as we would like.

Out of the cloud, there came a voice. That’s the amazing thing about this story. Well, ok, that is one more amazing thing about this story. It wasn’t out of certainty that glory was revealed. It was from the cloud that the voice spoke, that instructions were given. It came after the fumbled attempt to make some meaning, to provide some permanence to this incredible event. It came when shame rose up. What was it that came from the cloud? A declaration of love, and a simple instruction. We try so hard to make things complicated. We want something deep, something profound, something obscure. Instead, we get parental love and an invitation to pay attention. That’s it? Well, no. The instruction, “Listen to him” is more than just hearing the words. It’s more than just nodding along and slapping him on the back and saying, “Good words, Preacher!” “Listen to him” means shaping yourself around his words. It means taking them into your soul, letting them take root and grow

into a life worthy of the gospel, as Paul says. “Listen to him” means letting the picture he paints of the kingdom be the vision by which you guide your life.

Behind it, all these words and all this life, is the declaration of love. That’s where the glory is revealed. It’s not the light show at the top of the mountain; it’s not the devouring fire; it is in the simple statement, “This is my beloved son.” It is in the affirmation, “With him, I am well pleased.” When we listen, when we take in his words, we too are God’s beloved.

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