

February 11, 2018 Transfiguration of Jesus  
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2 Kings 2:1-12, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6  
Mark 9:2-9

**Grace and peace, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**So, first of all**, I will simply say, as counter-cultural around Hope as this may be,  
it is a totally appropriate day to add a little Hallelujah here or there during the sermon.  
We'll hide those Hallelujah's away soon enough, Lent is coming, and quickly.  
Why not use them while we can? Can I get a Hallelujah?

**"Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,**  
and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured, before them."  
Did anyone wonder what happened six days before that mountain top experience?  
Six days earlier, Jesus was calling them together and telling them about discipleship.  
He used words that they could scarcely understand, at least with the depth Jesus implied:  
Words like following, denying oneself, taking up the cross, losing one's life.

**Now, it's six days after that reality check and Jesus takes** Peter, James, and John up the mountain.  
It's six days after when the ancestors in the tradition, Moses and Elijah, are talking with Jesus.  
It's six days after when, similar to his baptism not-so-many years before, a cloud overshadows and in the  
fuzzy thin air the voice of God rings out again.  
On that transfiguration mountain, six days after Jesus laid it out for them, God is revealing Hope.

**At the beginning of Mark, Jesus dipped into the mucky waters** of the Jordan River only to have the  
heavens torn apart when God's own voice blesses him: **You are my beloved.**  
Nine chapters and plenty of miracles in between, in the gospel we hear today,  
the same voice speaks, this time from a mountain cloud.  
This time it isn't speaking to Jesus saying, "You are my beloved,"  
but rather it is declaring, apparently to Peter and James and John,  
in case they wondered, in case they were tempted to shrug off the glory,  
in case the very real predictions of challenges to come were giving them pause:  
**"This is my Son, my chosen, my beloved-Listen to him." This is my beloved.**

**In that moment, God is coming out with it, declaring ever so clearly:** This is my beloved—listen.

No longer is this an intimate baptismal promise.

Now, ready or not, it propels them, it propels us, into a new way of living.

It reveals hope, deep, real, sometimes hard...hope.

Now we're involved, now we're part of making Christ's reign real, palpable, we're on the hook.

As Karoline Lewis says, a Transfigured God means we must be Transfigured Believers.

**There's something powerful about glory** that doesn't have to be contained,

but in itself has space for the messy, broken, unfinished,

labor and birth that comes with death and new life.

It is this insistent, persistent, relentless glory, this hope,

that goes with us down the mountain, into Ash Wednesday, into Lent, all the way to the cross.

And, it is this hope that God reveals glimpse by glimpse in our own community.

**Let me share some transfiguration stories this morning:**

**As many of you have heard, we are in the midst of a capital appeal called Revealing Hope.**

We'll use these funds to do basics like pay our mortgage, but also special projects around the facility.

If you've ever approached the church along 6<sup>th</sup> street, you may have noticed our bleak appearance.

The storm windows covering our beautiful stained glass are now a dull opaque brown.

We'll do some stained glass repair and replace these weathered storm windows with clear ones and lighting

that'll allow the beauty we see inside to be seen from the outside. Revealing hope.

We'll also build a community bread oven on an island in our parking lot,

create a children's play area,

do some upkeep on the organ,

and give away a portion to good ministries we choose together.

**It's an exciting and necessary campaign**—my family and I are grateful to support it

We'll reveal God's hope.

We'll reveal our hope in God.

And at once we'll reveal more clearly our commitment to being a place of hope in this neighborhood.

God is active and very much alive in this congregation—I'm convinced of it.

This morning we dedicate our commitments for the coming three-year cycle.

If you'd like to join in, in any way, you are most welcome. Thank you for participating.

**A second story: Last year in late January we became a sanctuary congregation.**

We committed to offer a place of safety and hospitality for our neighbors who are immigrants and facing deportation proceedings.

It was a year ago **today** that this became real.

It happened in a whirlwind and people keep stepping up to help in practical and deeply moving ways.

Our coalition partners at University Baptist, St. Frances Cabrini Catholic, First Congregational and St. Cecilia Catholic and St. Anthony Park UCC and others, they keep showing up.

Our ministry together is stronger than ever and for that I am grateful.

And you prayed and prayed, befriended, learned some Spanish, attended hearings, shared some meals, and prayed some more...for all those in sanctuary, but for a fix, a real fix, for immigration. .

Honestly, it's been a transformative experience, blessed in so many ways, not the least that hope is revealed in these holy relationships.

**Another story: Over the last year or two, many of you got to know a young man named Jacob.**

An electrical engineering student at the U, Jacob also loves music and became a regular in the Hope Choir and played piano with the band.

Before Christmas we prayed Godspeed for Jacob and early in the new year, right before moving east to take a new job in Washington DC, Jacob stopped by for one more cup of tea and a conversation.

As he left that day, teary eyed, both of us, he asked me to tell you how grateful he is for this congregation, this community.

Here he found a safe space in the midst of much discernment, a place to use his gifts, a place to grow, a place of faith and hope.

I pray that's what everyone finds.

It transformed Jacob, and, quite honestly, as often happens, we were transformed in the process.

Revealing Hope

**And one last transfiguration story:**

**At the end of January a long-time Hope member, Millie Holmgren died.** She was 101 years old.

Millie was a fixture of Southeast Minneapolis and with her husband Milton, who worked in athletics at the U, she could tell you stories about Bowl games they attended over the years.

Millie's gifts were in hospitality and sharing her faith; she was part of Dorcas Circle to her death.

She's been buried next by Milton in their home town cemetery west of the Cities and we'll have a memorial service for Millie in late April when the weather warms.

Today as a community of Christ's beloved, we mark Millie's passing into glory:

revealing our hope,

and naming our loss and the arc created by the waters of baptism.

The love and hope of Christ Jesus holds us in our living and in our dying and in our living eternally.

It's in that spirit that I invite you into prayer:

**Holy God, holy and powerful, we remember before you today our sisters Millie. We thank you for giving her to us to know and to love as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth. At these waters of baptism you welcomed her into your love. At these waters you comforted her in times of trouble and encouraged her in delight. At these waters you now enfold her into Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of life everlasting. Console us who mourn and bring us together to feast with all the saints of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**