

**Rev. Mike Cole**  
**Providence Presbyterian Church**  
**Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**February 15, 2026**  
**Exodus 24:12-18; Matthew 17:1-9**

**"Transforming Reality"**

Years ago when I was doing research for a keynote address to a youth retreat, I discovered some interesting facts about God's universe. For instance, there are more stars in space than there are grains of sand on the earth. If you attempted to count the stars in the galaxy at a rate of three per second, it would take 1,000 years to count them. A neutron star is so dense that a tablespoon of matter from it would weigh more than 5,000 tons. The planet Saturn has a density lower than water, which means that if there were a bathtub big enough into which to put Saturn, it would float. There is a lot more to the universe than we realize. Our perceptions limit our view of the universe.

One day nearly two thousand years ago Peter, James and John had their perception of reality tested in a way that forever changed their lives. In the final days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, he took Peter, James and John up a high mountain by themselves. Now, this was probably a mountain that they knew well. After all they were from Galilee and knew the terrain as well as they knew the backs of their hands. But something happened up on that mountain that made them wonder how well they knew their world after all.

Jesus took them up a high mountain, which signaled to them and to us that something significant was about to happen. We know from other passages of scripture that a mountain is a favorite place for an encounter with God. And sure enough, that's exactly what happened. I imagine this trio of disciples trudging up the mountain with Jesus, maybe thinking that they were climbing the mountain to get a better view of the world. That's exactly what they got, but not in the way they were expecting.

Climbing a mountain is hard work, but it is always worth the effort to get the view. The disciples got more of a view of the world than they could have imagined. There they were, climbing alongside Jesus, a man they had known and worked beside for three years. They knew Jesus (or so they thought) as well as they knew themselves.

Then, as they reached the pinnacle of the mountain, suddenly they saw Jesus in a way they had never seen him before. He was transfigured before them. His face shone as brightly as the sun. His common clothes became dazzling white. Then, as if that weren't

enough to cause cardiac arrest, they saw two men, whom they presumed to be Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Finally, a strange bright cloud (definitely not a dark one) overtook them and a voice boomed out from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

What an extraordinary event. Peter, James and John were literally floored by the vision. For the moment, forget Peter's impetuous response - "Gosh, it's a good thing we're here. Let's build three monuments to this moment!" Peter demonstrated, once again, his penchant for putting his mouth in gear before his brain was engaged. Even though Peter's response reveals our human tendency to want to enshrine sacred moments, it is really not the focus of this passage. The transfiguration itself is the focus, because it revealed a reality that was heretofore hidden from the disciples and us.

For one moment, the tough crust of mundane reality was peeled back for them to see Jesus as he really was (and is). They saw Jesus as the long-promised Christ, the one sent by God to save them. They caught a glimpse of Jesus' divine nature - a glimpse which would forever alter their view of Jesus and their world. When they walked back down that mountain, they walked back into a very different world, a world now considerably expanded.

But Jesus cautioned the disciples on their way back down the mountain not to tell anyone of this vision. Why? Because, I believe he knew that people would misunderstand the vision and its meaning. People would try to turn it into some hocus-pocus, magical event, conjured up with smoke and mirrors - some cheap trick perpetrated by Jesus to keep the disciples in line.

That's a human tendency, too - to try to figure out how something happened rather than simply revel in it as a miraculous event intended for our enlightenment. Instead of dissecting the event to determine how Jesus' face could be as bright as the sun, or how his road-worn clothing could become dazzling white, we need to open our eyes to the reality to which it points - Jesus is God!

In humanizing Jesus, making him "one of us," which he was, we sometimes forget that he also possesses all the divine attributes of God. Sometimes I think that we have focused so much on "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," that we have forgotten "What a God We Have in Jesus."

I suspect that the disciples had much the same problem. They worked side-by-side with Jesus; they saw him sweat just like them; they saw him laugh just like them; they saw him grieve just like them. Naturally they assumed that he was just like them in all ways. And he was. But he was also more than them.

Jesus was and is God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe; the One who hung the stars and set the planets in motion; the One who formed the earth out of nothing; the One who created every living being; the One who breathed life into our nostrils. That is reality. We just don't get many opportunities to see it. But the Transfiguration is one of those moments. Peter wanted to fix that transfiguring, mountaintop moment in concrete, seal it in epoxy for all time. But he couldn't and neither can we. Glimpses like that come and go. In God's continual flirtation with the world, only rarely does God bowl us over. More often, God quietly courts us, teases, pulls back the curtain between today and eternity for only a peek.

And when such a glimpse is given us, on a mountaintop in Judea or in a Sunday pew in worship, we cherish it, but we can't even try to capture it for it is a gift, a glimpse, a fleeting, blessed gift of revelation. Peter wanted his vision of glory to go on forever.

We've had our moments too, when we wished the choir would go on singing, or maybe we were even sad to see the sermon end (Ha! Ha!), or when we wished we could tell everyone exactly why and how our heart was strangely warmed in some moment of ecstasy and worship. But we can't. It would be hard for others to understand why so inexplicable a moment has changed us. So, we cherish our glimpse of glory and go back to the valley, or at least to Sunday lunch at Kentucky Fried Chicken, somehow different because for one shining moment, we have seen life clearly.

The transfiguration happened in one moment for the disciples, but for Jesus, it was an ongoing process. He lived in that reality even while he lived in our reality. The implications of this recognition for us are enormous. When we pray to Jesus we pray to One who has all the authority of God.

The Transfiguration demonstrates that Jesus has the power to transform our reality - from sickness to health, from fear to courage, from dark to light, from sin to salvation, from despair to hope; from defeat to victory; from self-centeredness to other-centeredness; from broken-ness to wholeness; and from death to life. The Presbyterian Church motto is, "Reformed and always being reformed," meaning that the Reformation didn't stop in the seventeenth century, but is ongoing. We are a church that began in change and continues to change.

Well, the same could be said of our lives in Jesus Christ - we are transformed and always being transformed. When we first accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are transformed and so is our perception of reality. But the transformation doesn't stop there. We are constantly being transformed by glimpses of the reality that Jesus presents to us through his life and his teachings.

My prayer for each of us as we prepare to enter the Lenten season is that we will open ourselves to the glimpses of reality Jesus gives us everyday and sometimes in the most unexpected places- whether its through an Ash Wednesday Service, or in a moment of service to another, or in communion, or in the quietness of private prayer, or in the miracle of childbirth, or watching a flight of geese, or in any of the thousands of moments when we feel connected with God. My prayer is that we will savor those transforming moments and use them as springboards into deeper devotion and service.

After all, that is the purpose of the Transfiguration - to give us a glimpse of the transforming reality of Jesus Christ, by which we are transformed and always being transformed for close communion with God and selfless service to one another.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**The Charge: Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God will equip you. God will accomplish a purpose in your being there. Christ who dwells within you has something He wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in God's grace, love and power. Amen**