

Strength of the Mountain  
King of Glory Lutheran Church  
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry  
Year A: Transfiguration: Mt 17: 1-9 “Encouraged by the Sight”  
February 14-15, 2026

**Matthew 17:1-9** <sup>1</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. <sup>2</sup> And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. <sup>3</sup> Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>5</sup> While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” <sup>6</sup> When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” <sup>8</sup> And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

*God appeared to the three disciples in glory through Jesus, Moses and Elijah, to strengthen them for the days to come. That was clearly revealed upon another mountain, Golgotha, at Jesus' death. None of us can stay in God's presence forever.*

On 24 June 1981 around 6:30 pm, the 15 year-old Ivanka Ivanković, and her 16 year-old friend Mirjana Dragičević, were on a walk to talk and have a smoke.<sup>[25]</sup> According to Ivanka, she noticed the shimmering silhouette of a woman bathed in a brilliant light on nearby Mount Podbrdo,<sup>[20]</sup> saying "Mirjana, look, it's Gospa!" (Our Lady) to Mirjana. Mirjana scoffed at the idea, and they continued to walk. The pair met Milka Pavlovic, 13, who asked them to help bring in the sheep, and the three returned to the nearby hill, where they all reportedly saw the apparition. They were then joined by their friend Vicka Ivanković, 17, who also reportedly saw the apparition and ran down the hill in fright. Vicka later returned with Ivan Dragičević, 16, and Ivan Ivankovic, 20, who were picking apples; Ivan Dragičević was so frightened that he dropped his apples and ran. Later, they said they all saw the same apparition.

The six seers told Franciscan friar Father [Jozo Zovko](#), who was the parish priest at St. James Church in Medjugorje,<sup>[25]</sup> that they had seen the Virgin Mary (Gospa).<sup>[25][28]</sup> Zovko was initially skeptical; he noticed that the seers became agitated if anyone hinted that they were lying, and that their physical descriptions of the Gospa were consistent with each other.<sup>[29]</sup> According to Randall Sullivan, they described her as "a young woman about twenty years old, they said, with blue eyes, black hair, and a crown of stars around Her head; She wore a white veil and bluish-grey robe. Each of the children said they had not been able to see the Virgin's feet, described Her as hovering just above the ground on a white cloud, and said she spoke in a singing voice."

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our\\_Lady\\_of\\_Medjugorje#Initial\\_events](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Medjugorje#Initial_events))

The sightings of Mary at Medjuorje continued regularly for the original group of youth. And years later, now, they all still say they see Mary. Pilgrims from all over the world have made the trip to be present at this sacred sight. By chance, I happened to meet a couple who make the trip as often as possible. They told me it is a quiet, lovely place where there is nightly worship.

Now whether you believe this is true or not, is beside the point. For the original group and for pilgrims since, Mary's presence, they say, can be felt there. If a person had never believed in God before, or was a life-long believer, what would being in that place do for their faith?

I can guess that the sightings of Mary are remembered and drawn upon when Mother Mary or God feels distant and far away. When prayers aren't being answered a person can return to that spot in their minds and take comfort that God has revealed Mother Mary in a very real way in this world, our space and time.

Peter, James and John were to be the three disciples Jesus used primarily to build the church upon. Just the week before Jesus says "Peter, you are the rock upon which I will build my church!" Then poor Peter takes great offense at Jesus' report that He will undergo great suffering and death at the hands of His betrayers. To which Jesus turns around and says "Peter, get behind me Satan!" It's been a rough week for the guy.

Well needless to say, things turn around rather rapidly when Jesus takes the three disciples up on the mountain. We know, living here in Colorado how quickly the weather can change. One minute the sun is shining brightly and in the next ten, the storm clouds have gathered and it's beginning to rain. Here, it wasn't a change of weather, but a change of people and appearances! Moses, the giver of God's law,

and Elijah the great prophet are suddenly there on the mountain with Jesus. These are the coveted Oscar winners of the Bible. Jesus appearance is shiny, like driving into the setting sun when you've got to wear shades!

Just like the sightings of Mary in Bosnia/Herzegovina that common folks remember and which encourage their faith, the same will be true for Peter, James and John. Jesus knew they needed to realize more fully who He was. Appearing transfigured and with the Old Testament greats of Moses and Elijah would firmly cement this in their minds.

Weeks later when things were beginning to fall apart with Jesus, they could go back to that mountain top experience and remember He was God. He was even greater than Moses and Elijah. That would strengthen their faith and guide them.

I've heard you tell one another stories about your own mountain top experiences. Or even just normal experiences of God. 'I'm convinced an angel was there...' 'I saw Jesus in my dream.' 'God spoke to me – without a doubt.'

Don't those moments of divine revelation give us hope and strength in our faith? When we are weary or needing guidance, we go back to those times we believe God showed up. We ask God to show up again.

Now if you don't feel like you have ever had this kind of a God experience, I do not want you to think that your faith is deficient in any way! God shows up to all of us through the love of family and friends, through touch, through the receiving of Valentines, through a text message or a phone call that says, "you came across my mind, how are you doing?" God is absolutely revealing God's self to us in all of these ways. When we are aware of how God moves in our lives, we take these as divine whispers that God is indeed with us all the time.

But, we cannot and even Jesus could not stay on the mountain forever.

Peter doesn't quite know what to do, so he wants to do something! There hasn't been a class for what to do during Transfiguration. "Let's build some tabernacles so we can stay for awhile." Not to be so. The couple doesn't want their wedding day to end its been so much fun! The team doesn't want the ticker-tap parade to be over, because the win was so sweet.

Instead, Jesus encourages the men not to be afraid and as they are going back down the mountain, He doesn't want these three men to tell anyone about what happened 'up there'. Down they go. No more shiny bright. The glasses come off.

We hear this story, now, at the end of Epiphany and before the first weekend of Lent, because during Lent, Jesus will come closer and closer to the cross. He knows that suffering, arrest, and crucifixion are ahead of Him. He cannot stay on the glorious mountain top. He must fulfill the mission ahead of Him; the one which will take place on another mountain, Mt Calvary. Golgotha, known as the place of the skull.

Whether it was a mountain or a hill, one mountain top experience defines another. Jesus' glory was revealed with Moses and Elijah. Jesus' glory was also revealed in His ugly death upon a cross. Just as the Law came into being from God to Moses, the inbreaking of God's glory, grace and love came into being through that cross of death. There is a brand new *reality*! Even better than 'reality tv' like Survivor. God has broken into a fallen humanity through the death of Jesus...who by the way, will be the ultimate survivor.

People of God, there is a Blue Cross at the bottom of the hill in Medjuorje to memorialize the place where Mary appeared. The place where Jesus is said to have died is now enclosed within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem. We, humans, have a habit of trying to contain or memorialize God moments we can't possibly understand or contain.

Yet more than that, let's remember our God moments and allow God to be with us on the mountain tops, or down in the valley of the shadows when life isn't going quite as we like. Because God in Jesus, didn't minimize the suffering ahead of Him or try to take a different route. He went straight towards it, trusting God the Father was with Him.

We can trust the same. Each weekend we worship the God we understand and the God beyond our comprehension...knowing that same God is with us wherever we go. Love has come...for better or worse...through thick and thin. Thanks be to God! Amen.