Through the written word and the spoken word, God help us to hear your Living Word, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION, Luke 9:28-36

It is good for us to be here.

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It is good for us to be on the mountain top with God. It is good for us to have God fully revealed to us. It is good for us to carry God with us as we journey back down the mountain.

Today is the Feast of the Transfiguration. On this day, we celebrate Jesus going up a mountain with a couple of his dear disciples to pray. While Jesus is praying, he is transfigured, his form changes and he becomes a dazzling light. Suddenly with him, Moses and Elijah appear.

Peter, likely in some combination of awe, confusion, delight, and shock, says “Master it is good for us to be here.” And then a cloud comes and overshadows the group which furthers the confusion and fear. From within the cloud, the voice of God proclaims, “This is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

I imagine that Peter and John and James are never the same after this awe-inspiring moment.

On the Feast of the Transfiguration, we also hear of Moses going up Sinai and meeting God. Moses is so transformed by being in God’s presence that he returns absolutely GLOWING with the light of God. Moses must wear a veil because of the shear brightness that comes from his experience of God. While it is not Jesus’ Transfiguration for which the feast is named, Moses experiences a special sort of transfiguring as well. I imagine his vision of God and of himself are both changed.

When we look at these texts, we can see that The Feast of the Transfiguration highlights these moments of going up a mountain and experiencing a change in view. Transfiguration is about gaining a fuller understanding of God. It is a day of proclaiming, “It is good for us to be here” when a moment allows us to bear witness to the fullness of who God is. In our gospel passage, God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The disciples have a moment of revelation, they see God, they are assured that Jesus is God’s Son, and they will never be the same.

Many queer preachers, theologians, and biblical scholars refer to the text of the Transfiguration as a sort of Coming Out story. Another facet of Jesus’ identity is revealed to three of his closest friends. The disciples come face to face with the brilliant divine reality of Jesus’ life. Another piece of Jesus is OUT in the world.

Culturally, we think of “Coming Out” in relation to the LGBTQ+ community, and I think this narrative applies to many of our identities. I often joke about coming out as a pastor when I am meeting new people. I share a piece of myself and wait for people to react. “Coming Out” narratives might apply to any identity we share that could be met with mixed reactions. Sharing a diagnosis, a mental health struggle, disability, or neurodivergence. Naming to a friend you haven’t seen in a while something big or hard that has happened and changed you—a divorce, a death, a lost job, or even a big promotion, or the birth of a child. Sharing our identities and our big news can be vulnerable, so while we do not culturally refer to all of these as “Coming Out,” I think they bear some similarities. It is vulnerable. It can be freeing. It can show you who your friends really are. It can open you up to deep joy or pain.

I personally like to apply different language to these narratives. Maybe this will help us open up this gospel passage and some moments in our own lives.

I prefer to use language of “Coming In.” When I share of myself with another person, I am saying “come in.” Join me here. I want you to be a part of what is happening in my life. I prefer this over coming out because I want to resist the pressure often put on LGBTQ people to come *out* publicly for the sake of other people more so than for themselves. For me, the subtle shift to coming in invites relationship rather than transaction. It invites openness rather than assumptions.

So how does coming in apply to Jesus in our gospel passage on this Feast of the Transfiguration. Jesus has said to three of his friends, come with me. Journey with me.

They all go up the mountain and come into this incredible moment with their friend and teacher. They are brought into a cloud and shown definitively that Jesus is the Son of God. When they are brought into the cloud, I imagine God saying, “come here, come close, I have something to tell you.” I imagine a grandparent on a rocking chair inviting a little one into their lap to tell a special story.

Come on in. Join me in this place where things are revealed in glory. Jesus is *coming in* or *coming out* as God’s beloved Son, again. In case folks have missed it. God’s language in this moment mirrors that of Jesus’ baptism. In Luke’s telling of Jesus’ baptism a voice comes from heaven saying, “You are my son, my beloved. With you I am well pleased.” A poetic parallel.

You are my son. This is my son.

My beloved. My chosen.

With you I am well pleased. Listen to him.

When Luke invokes a similar voice from heaven and gives us this linguistic mirror from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we are reminded that God is pleased by Her children and that we are to listen to Jesus. God is pleased by Jesus and I believe by extension, when we listen to Jesus, we are assured that God is pleased with us, her dear children.

These moments in scripture and in our lives are mirrors in another way-- The waters of baptism—Jesus’ own and *ours—* require a vulnerable trust in God.

Journeying with Jesus to experience awe-inspiring revelation requires a vulnerable trust in God. Both give us the chance to experience transfiguration and bold change, to see the brilliant spark of God’s love in our lives, and to grow in community and relationship.

There are times in life when each of us will be on the either side of a vulnerable moment of revelation. Coming out or coming in as queer. Sharing a hidden or invisible part of yourself. Saying I love you to someone for the first time. Learning of a friend’s diagnosis. Hearing someone’s story of abuse. Being brought into a person’s dreams of the future.

We will get to have moments of saying “come in.” *Come in* to this mental, emotional, physical, spiritual space I am in right now. Saying with vulnerability and trust, “I want you to join me in my full truth.” We will have moments when we are invited to join someone with grace and love. These are holy moments when the pieces of ourselves that are known to God alone are shared with another human being. Moments of holy revelation. Moments of Transfiguration.

The Feast of the Transfiguration reminds us about Jesus’ identity and how it was shared with his earthly companions. Jesus is the Son of God, God’s chosen, and we are instructed to listen. Jesus is a dazzling and brilliant light in the world. Jesus invites his friends to journey with him and to hold his truth with him.

The Feast of the Transfiguration also reminds us that when we feel safe to do so and when we are with trusted people, it is beautiful and holy to share our authentic and dazzling selves. We will be changed and go back down the mountain as transformed people. We journey up to moments of vulnerability and come back down drenched in God’s goodness, love, and mercy.

It is good for us to be here.

It is good for us to be here, to be vulnerable and open, to be witnesses to the God-created people around us. It is good for us to be here, dazzling in the light of God, changed through relationship, and never to be the same.

Amen.