

**“GET YOUR GLOW ON”**

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**TEXT:** Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

“I’ll believe it when I see it!” How many times have you said that in your life? Or heard it?

So much of how we believe and operate is based on our ability to see tangible evidence. The whole field of science and medicine is all about our desire to have proof that explains the things we see happening in the world around us. And that spills over into everything we do. I don’t think I could tell you how many times Olivia has argued with me about what clothes she should wear to school on a winter day. She will want to wear a dress or a cheer uniform. I try to explain that it’s below freezing and she needs to put on more layers. She insists this is what she wants. We go back and forth until she realizes she’s making no progress and agrees to wear the winter-appropriate clothes that are ready for her to put on. And don’t you know it, the minute we walk out the door to the car and the garage door goes up, she comments about how cold it is and she’s glad she’s wearing her winter clothes!

So much of what happens in our society tells us that we need proof before we can begin to believe. And that spills over into our faith as well. In our increasingly proof-driven and visual culture, it is easy to think that faith comes by seeing, but as we see in our scripture reading this morning, sometimes faith is built on a lot more than one fleeting moment of insight.

This morning, we come to Luke’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration, his mountaintop transformation. Where Jesus gets his glow on! Just before the transfiguration, Jesus is talking with his disciples, and he asks the question, “Who do people say that I am?” The disciples tell him that some say he is John the Baptist or Elijah, while others say he is a prophet. So then Jesus asks the men, “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Messiah.”

Now, in the transfiguration, we, along with Peter, James, and John, get to see what that means. Jesus gets his glow on! But here's the thing; the unique revelation of Jesus extends beyond what happens on the mountain that day. We cannot separate that mountaintop experience of Jesus' transfiguration from his healing of the demon-possessed boy down the mountain the next day.

Certainly as Peter, James, and John watch Jesus' transfiguration unfold before them, they are stunned. They knew the role and significance of Moses and Elijah in Jewish history; to have seen them standing before them would have been amazing enough, but what they also see is Jesus, now clothed in dazzling white, conversing with the ancient Jewish prophets. Jesus got his glow on! It's easy enough to dismiss such events as some sort of odd hallucination. Jewish scriptures and traditions tell of various events like this; when the veil of ordinariness that normally prevents us from seeing "inside" to the reality of the situation is drawn back, such that we can catch a glimpse of the greater reality. The glow of Jesus. And indeed, that is what happens in this moment high atop what was probably Mount Hermon, just north of Caesarea Philippi.

The majesty of this moment is not lost on the three disciples who are there with Jesus. As they watch Jesus conversing with Moses and Elijah, Peter also begins to speak, blurting out the first thing that comes to mind. Peter suggests that they should sort of "capture" the moment by building three booths or shrines; one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But, Luke says, Peter didn't know what he was saying. Certainly, Jesus' dramatic mountaintop transformation is a moment of great significance. It is a sign of Jesus being entirely caught up with, even bathed in, the love, power, and kingdom of God, such that it transforms his whole being. He got his glow on! This transfiguration is the physical sign of God's message spoken just moments later, "This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him." But this is only half the story; the rest of the revelation, the rest of what we are to know, and understand, and believe about Jesus, happens the next day far from the heights of that mountain.

Luke tells us that Peter does not know what he is saying what he reflects that they should build some shrines there atop the mountain, but how many of us would say almost the same thing? We experience these beautiful moments in life; we reach the majestic heights of the mountains, and we want to stay there forever. We can't quite let go of our childhood home because of great and wonderful

memories there. We are baptized or saved in a certain church, and suddenly not just the congregation, but the building holds a great significance in our lives. And over time, the significance of the experience is lost to the seeming significance of the place. The result of such tendencies in our life of faith is that we get stuck “inside” the church. We get so caught up in the comfortable, the ritual, the familiar that we forget how these encounters with God actually compel us to go live life out in the world, not to enshrine ourselves within the walls of the church. Our glow gets stuck inside!

Jesus is the Savior of the world, and to save the world, you have to be in the world. The transfiguration on the mountain underscores Jesus’ identity as the Son of God and the fulfillment of God’s promises and plans from the beginning of time, but Christ’s work the next day is the real revelation of who he is. And we need to hear his very serious rebuke of his disciples, who are unable to deal with the realities of the world because of their lack of faith. Everything seemed so perfect and right on the mountain, but for that to be so, it has to be applied to real life. Faith is not only something that is experienced; it is something that is lived! We have to take our glow out into the world!

There was a cliché sort of circling among Christians years back. It was kind of like that “WWJD/What Would Jesus Do?” idea, though it never really took off like that. This little phrase sought to bring some attention to Christian living beyond Sunday. We would talk about “the other six days.” It basically grew out of the idea that it’s great that Christians go to church and worship with their brothers and sisters in Christ on Sundays, but what about the other six days? How does what we do here on Sundays make a difference in the way we live the rest of our lives? That’s what this moment of transfiguration is all about. Jesus is trying to teach the disciples who he is. He’s trying to lift the cloud of uncertainty that surrounds them, to help them glimpse the reality that they are living. This moment of transfiguration on the mountaintop is basically the culmination of that. But what is revealed is not simply that this is God’s Son, a great King, the Prophet of prophets, and Ruler of rulers. By virtue of who God is, by virtue of God’s immense love for all of creation, God’s Son is one who loves the people that nobody else loves and takes care of the people that no one else will care for. So he can’t set up camp there on the mountain with Peter, James, and John, and the first thing he does is take care of this poor boy who is being convulsed by a demon. He takes his glow to the streets!

What about you? Where's your glow? Is this it for you? This one hour a week, is this the entirety of your life of faith? Is this place the shrine that embodies your faith? Have you taken your glow to the world? If it is, then you're only getting half the story! You're missing out! So much of experiencing Christ is what we do with "the other six days"! Getting our glow on! So much of experiencing Christ is how we take our faith beyond these walls, how we serve as the hands and feet of Christ, how we shine Christ's light in the world, especially in the dark corners where people are hurting and despairing. The story of the transfiguration matters because we have a definitive statement from God that Jesus is his own Son, but the true revelation of what that means comes when Jesus steps down the mountain and begins to love on people the way God loves people. And this is how we should love people, too!

Building a booth and hanging out wherever we are is the easy way out. But a life of faith in Jesus Christ is the "mountaintop" highs and the "valley lows"; it's the worship and praise in God's presence, and the sharing of God's love in the tough places of the world. Transfiguration is an invitation to go up the mountain and spend time with Jesus; searching and seeking, discerning, hearing, and heeding. But transfiguration is just as much a dramatic invitation to go down the mountain and work with Jesus in the valleys, in the turbulence and trials of everyday life. Taking your glow to the world. Sometimes we separate the mountain top experiences from the valley; we think we've seen it all, we think we know all we need to know, and done all we need to do, so we just live our lives and then go to church on Sundays. But the two can't really be separated. Faith is "both-and"; the seeing and the living, the hearing and the heeding; the vision on the mountaintop, and the healing in the real world. The glow AND taking it to the world!

Christ's transfiguration was all about Christ's role in the kingdom of God. And our transfiguration is all about our faith in that Christ. Now that we've experienced Christ, God's very own Son, what are we going to do about it? What will you make of "the other six days"? Get your glow on, my friends! And let it shine!

Amen