



From the desert, last Sunday, to the mountain top today; from temptations of fleeting promises in a fleeting world and the reminder from Jesus that we do not live on bread alone: to a mountain top vision, a holy communion embraced in love and tempered by human struggles.

Today we find Jesus, not alone, but with a community. He did not journey to this high mountain by himself, but with Peter, James, and John. For Matthew these three are the church, in communion with one another.

The journey to the mountain top reminds us that visions do not just happen. Like the journey of Abram and Sarah, they often begin with a willingness to make the sacrifice of going from one place or one way of seeing, to another!

It was because of the journey to the mountain top, that willingness to “go forth” to another place, that the Church (Peter, James, and John), encounter the one with whom they walked in new light, *but not only him*. On that mountain top the church was the church, *the whole church*, Moses and Elijah and all who have gone before: all who lived and live in the holy communion of God!

From that mountain top there, in dazzling light, the whole human family—the whole church—is seen as it truly is, one “holy communion” in the image of God. Is it any wonder Peter, James and John wanted to stay there! There they were safe from the reality and challenge of the world below.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, listen to him: The vision seen here must nourish the journey: the return to the valleys below—the place where life is less certain, less clear, where the cross of Christ is still thrust upon so many. The Church, who is us,

like those in the gospel, must leave this mountain, the one we stand on today, and we, like those three, must be changed, transfigured, because of what we see and do here.

Here we are, gathered in the name of Christ, summoned here by Christ, who is why we are here; why we do what we do in this place. We have journeyed here—a kind of mountain top. We come not alone, but together. From here, together, we can “*bear our share of hardship for the Gospel.*” Hardship? The hardship of being less certain than we have been, more open to seeing the light of Christ’s face transfiguring the face of those we have not seen before or just walked by. The hardship of mercy, compassion, listening, conversing, just caring, and the willingness to change our heart and our mind.

Like Abram and Sarah, in some way, we have heard the invitation: “*Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.*” Go from the familiar, the comfortable, the certain, from the way things have always been. GO! To land not always flowing with milk and honey, but often with great need, yet always with gifts enough to serve and transform lives.

We need to remember our journey here, and why we made it in the first place. Like Peter, James, and John, we have not come alone; we are not by ourselves.

Our gathering on this and every “Sunday” is a journey to a “high mountain.” A place from which we can see. A place we encounter Christ in one another and see what and who we have forgotten to notice. Here we become Peter, James, and John, here we are the church, *with* the whole Church!

In this place the dazzling light of God's word and the compassionate presence of Christ bathes us again, “*in clothing as white as light.*”

Here we see Moses and Elijah and our deceased parents and children, grandparents, great-grandparents, friends, neighbors, all who have

gone before us. Here the mystery of Christ is found among us!

Here, on this mountain top of our Sunday worship we glimpse the vision, the dazzling light of the Real Presence of Christ: the vision and the promise of how life could be; how life *ought* to be! Open hands from which gifts are given to serve the needs of the many; a heart where all are welcome, where truth is sought, and the many Abram's and Sarah's going forth from their homes, are seen, heard, and welcomed as the neighbor they are, with compassion and mercy.

Here we see, feel and enter the Holy Communion of God, which embraces the whole human family. Here the awesome sound of the voice of God is heard! Here, on this mountain, we are nourished by Christ himself to see clearly into the valley below.

But Like Peter, James, and John we cannot stay here nor, as Jesus speaks today, can we "tell the

vision to anyone," unless it nourishes the common life of all in the plains and valleys below; unless, from this place we run down the mountain with open hands and minds, merciful hearts and compassionate vision, bearing our hardship of the Gospel with the strength that comes from God, *"that all the communities of the earth will find blessing in us!"*

Remember what we sang as we climbed this mountain today: *"Tis good, Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; But since you bid us leave the mount, Come with us to the plain.*

And as we are sent from this mountain: *"Transfigure us O Lord, break the chains that bind us; "Transfigure us O Lord, Light for those in darkness, the hungry have their fill, glad tidings for the humble, the healing of all ills; in these we glimpse your glory..."*

Feel that gentle touch of Jesus and listen: ***"Rise, do not be afraid!"***

