

I have a book gifted to me from a retired pastor that is full of sermon jokes. Fair warning, they are mostly groaners. Here is the one for the transfiguration:

"A teacher in a Sunday school class was reading the story of the Transfiguration. As she read, she noticed one little boy seemed confused.

When she was finished she asked him, "Johnny, why don't you tell us where Jesus was in this story. He replied, "Oh, he was on a mountain."

"Yes, that's right; said the teacher, "Do you remember why he was up there?"

Johnny answered with a confused look, "I guess that's where his arithmetic class was held."

"The teacher looked at him and wondered what he meant. "What do you mean, arithmetic class?"

"Well" Johnny replied, "The Bible said, 'Jesus went up on the mountain and there he BEGAN TO FIGURE " ' "

The teacher smiled and said, "The scripture said, He went into the mountain and there He BECAME TRANSGURED NOT BEGAN TO FIGURE. "

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a very difficult concept to accept. Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John up on top of a mountain, and upon arriving, Jesus was transfigured, his appearance changed to white and then appearing with him were Moses and Elijah. Then Peter gets caught up in the moment and wants to stay,

but before he can finish his thoughts a voice from a cloud says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."

In the Epiphany this experience of the Transfiguration is like a book end. At one end or beginning you have the Baptism of Jesus and now at the end of the Epiphany season, you have the other book end the Transfiguration. And notice, the words from God are similar in both, at Jesus' baptism God says "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." and at the Transfiguration he says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." Notice the difference. God is telling the disciples to listen to Jesus.

Now, following the Transfiguration, Jesus sets his eyes on Jerusalem. We are entering the season of Lent, where we will see the glory of Jesus and also the cross of Jesus. The Transfiguration shows us the two sides to Jesus, His glory as he is transformed, and His suffering as he leaves the mountain and sets his eyes on Jerusalem and the cross. He tells the disciples after he comes down from the mountain that the Son of Man, Jesus, will be delivered up and killed but on the third day will be raised up. The Cross and the Glory.

For on this mountain, the disciples had a foretaste, or moments glimpse of what heaven would be like. There on that mountain, stood Jesus in all of his glory, and next to him, the guiding lights of God's promise to the Jewish people that they would be his chosen ones.

Did the disciples really understand what happened that moment? Did they recognize the importance of that experience? A little boy who was blind was taken to a famous specialist, who said that an operation might give him sight. After the delicate operation was over, and the weeks of healing finished, the little fellow opened his eyes and looked at his mother. But he did not know her, knowing only the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand. But when the mother spoke his

name, his little arms went around her neck and he said, "Mother, is this heaven?" In a way, it was. It was at least a foretaste of heaven. We have heard God's voice in his Word and felt the loving touch of his guiding hand. But when we see him face to face, it will truly be heaven.

Did the disciples know this was almost heaven? Along the way to the cross, we will see whether the disciples really do listen to Jesus. Do the disciples understand in these words of God, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God the Father really wants the disciples to listen to Him? If you know anything about scripture, you know that the disciples had a very difficult time listening to Jesus. The human condition of sin gets in the way.

Remember the scripture when Peter tells Jesus,
He said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!"
34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny that you know me three times."

And again in John 6 it says: *6 Then he came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"*

7 Jesus answered him, "You don't know what I am doing now, but you will understand later."

8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

10 Jesus said to him, "Someone who has bathed only needs to have their feet washed, but is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you."

And who could forget how well Peter listened to Jesus as he walked on the water, in Matthew 14: 28

28 Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the waters."

29 He said, "Come!" Peter went down from the boat, and walked on the waters to come to Jesus.

30 But when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

32 When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased.

God told the disciples on the mountain to Listen to Jesus: and that proved to be very difficult. Remember Thomas who said if he did not see the hands with the holes or the feet he would not believe that Jesus told them he would rise again on the third day. We could go on and on. If the disciples who had Jesus face to face with them had a very difficult time believing what he said, I would venture to say our task is even more difficult.

But we do have the Bible, the written stories of Jesus and his sayings, we do have the experience of the church down through the ages which tells the story over and over again, and we have each other, our own personal experiences of Jesus' actions in our lives to convince us of His love and mercy for us.

I remember the unchurched husband of a woman in a church I served as a field worker in Edmonton. He never attended church, but she was always there. She was a quiet, retiring woman, who took part in everything, but always in the background, always silently. Oh, there were many people who had talked to her husband urging church attendance and church membership. One day he finally came and eventually he united with the congregation. Some time later I had the occasion to ask him why? Who said the right thing to him? Who had finally convinced him? 'No one,' he

answered.' It was my wife. she never said anything, but, I guess, over the years, she kind of lived me into it."

God is telling the disciples - and us - to listen to Jesus. God is telling us to Live to Jesus!! Amen