

CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

Week 3: Transfigured



SIGNS OF THE
KINGDOM OF GOD

January 31 - February 14

KEY POINT

The Messiah has come to serve and calls us to serve others. Jesus' revelation as God's Son is almost immediately followed by an exorcism, reminding the disciples that staying on the mountain is not an option—Jesus has work to do here on earth, and so do they. The glory of Jesus is not to be kept on the mountain away from the people, a sign of righteous power, but rather is meant to dwell in the world for healing and salvation. Just as Jesus leads the wonderstruck disciples away from the cloud of God and into the world for work, we are led by his example to serve and care for those who are in the grip of oppressive powers.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 9:28-45

Psalm 36:5-10

OPENING PRAYER

God of the heavens, you come to earth not to terrify us but to call us to new life in you. Through your leader Moses you offered the Israelites a law—guidance for life in the Promised Land— liberation through compassion. Through your prophet Elijah you stretched out your hand to a people that had turned from you, offering forgiveness. Through your son Jesus, you walk among us, not to strike us with power but to invite us with love. Open our hearts today that we might hear your words of grace and welcome. Amen.

READ

Luke 9:28-45

ABOUT THE STORY

Today's story is the last story in the season of Epiphany. Throughout this winter season between Christmas and Lent, Christians around the world read stories of Jesus' ministry, exploring who he is and how he reveals God in his work in the world. We, like the magi who visited the baby or like the disciples who followed the teacher, may be wondering exactly who Jesus is. Today's story is a decisive answer to that question when God proclaims: "This is my Son, the Chosen; listen to him!"

Jesus has desperately been trying to explain to his disciples that his work is not just about powerful teachings, incredible healings, and miraculous deeds. He has come to usher in the kingdom of God, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:19). But, as happens too often, the disciples see Jesus through their own lens of experience. They have difficulty accepting that his ministry involves not only wandering from town-to-town teaching and healing outsiders, but also the impossible death and resurrection he predicts.

In today's story, Jesus is transformed before their eyes and is joined by two of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people, Moses and Elijah. Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery and into the wilderness. For forty years they struggled with the meaning and practice of God's law: what did it mean to be the chosen people of God? Elijah was one of the first and one of the greatest prophets, a person specially chosen to call the Israelites back to God and to care for their neighbors. His job was to remind them what it meant to be the chosen people of God, the glorious God who had delivered them from slavery. Now, Jesus' face reflects that same glory, and his conversation with Moses and Elijah reveals that his mission is the same: to call the people back to who they were meant to be.

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But Jesus is not meant to be kept on a mountain, to be reached only by the righteous. He attends to the world as well, casting a demon from an only child, showing through action that God has come to deliver the people not through might but through compassionate service.

SHARE

- Today's story begins with Jesus heading to a mountain to pray, escaping the many demands and requests that face him in his extraordinary life.
Discuss as a group:
 - Where do you go to feel reconnected to God?
 - What gets in the way of having that connection more often?
 - Who among you has been on a retreat? What was it like?
- If the point was not for the disciples to go and tell others, why do you think Jesus brought them up to witness his mountaintop transformation?
- When have you heard something you did not understand? Did you ask about it or let it go?

PRAY

Lord, we forget who you are and who you made us to be. But we can take comfort knowing you do not forget. As we go from here, remind us of your hopes for us, today and always. Amen.

BLESS

Mark one another with the sign of the cross on your hand and say, "May God's light shine in and through you. Amen."

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Clear a shelf and add trinkets, candles, cards, or other reminders to pause and listen for the voice of God.
- Jesus' being on the mountaintop imitates Moses' receiving the law from God at Mount Sinai. Read through Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and Psalm 19.
- Although Jesus is angry with his disciples, he continues his work. If you find yourself annoyed with someone who has misunderstood you or left tasks unfinished, pause and reflect before you respond.

