



A Love That

SHINES

Sermon Series Guide

A Love That Shines
Sermon Series
February 9 - March 2, 2025

This study focuses on the surprising light of Christ's love that has come into the world in unexpected places and people. A love that we are called to follow, reflect and share.

February 9, 2025: Fishing for People

February 16, 2025: Blessings and Woes

February 23, 2025: Love Your Enemies

March 2, 2025 Transfiguration of Our Lord

Resources:

ELCA Lectionary Year C

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February 9, 2025

Fishing For People

The fifth Sunday after Epiphany highlights unlikely instruments and circumstances appointed to reveal God's glory. "Who will go for us?" God asks. A person of unclean lips, a former persecutor of the church of God, and three fishermen who couldn't catch a thing. More surprising still, perhaps is that we are also called.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, thank you for this time together. Give us guidance that we may have the wisdom to understand your word so we can have the strength and confidence to follow you. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Gospel Reading: Luke 5:1-11

After Jesus's power is revealed to Simon, James and John when they catch an enormous number of fish, they do not need convincing to fish for people. They left everything and followed him.

Daily Discipleship: Luke 5:1-11 **turn to pages 5-6 for the study**

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)

In today's reading, the prophet Isaiah received a vision from God, calling him to announce judgement against Israel. Despite Isaiah's awareness of his inadequacy, he responds, "Here am I; send me."

- If King Uzziah represents stability to Judah, What does his death mean?
- How would you describe what Isaiah saw, heard, felt and smelled in versus 1-4?
- Why does Isaiah say "Woe to me! I am ruined?"
- How does a live coal from the altar touching Isaiah's lips take away his guilt and sin?
- What is Isaiah willing to do for God?

Application Question:

- What is Jesus calling us to leave behind to follow him?

Closing Prayer:

Share and pray for any concerns of the group.
Lord's Prayer

February 16, 2025

Blessings and Woes

Blessings and curses abound in the sixth Sunday after Epiphany readings. We would do well to listen closely to whom the “blessed ares” and the “woe tos” are directed and to find our place in the crowd among those who desire to touch Jesus.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, thank you for this time together. Give us guidance that we may have the wisdom to understand your word so we can have the strength and confidence to follow you. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:17-26

Jesus teaches a crowd of followers about the nature and demands of discipleship. Who is truly blessed in the eyes of God?

Daily Discipleship: Luke 6:17-26 **turn to pages 7-8 for the study**

Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

Jeremiah 17:5-10 contains a collection of wisdom sayings that contrast two ways of life. Life with God brings blessings; the power and vitality of God is active in our life. Life without God brings a curse, the power of death.

- What are the contrasts between the cursed and the blessed in verses 5 and 7?
- When the drought comes, what hope does Jeremiah have because he trusts in the Lord? (contrast in verses 6 and 8)
- Why does Jeremiah say “the heart is deceitful above all things”?
- How does the Lord respond to Jeremiah’s question in verse 9, “Who can understand it”?

Application Question:

- Knowing you are blessed by God today, how might you bless others?

Closing Prayer:

Share and pray for any concerns of the group.
Lord’s Prayer

February 23, 2025

Love Your Enemies

The Seventh Sunday after Epiphany. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, thank you for this time together. Give us guidance that we may have the wisdom to understand your word so we can have the strength and confidence to follow you. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus invites his followers to shower radical love, blessings, forgiveness, generosity and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

Daily Discipleship: Luke 6:27-38 **turn to page 9-10 for the study**

Reading: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Many years after being sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. Second in command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intention for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

- What was the response of Joseph's brothers when they saw him alive after 22 years?
- Why has Joseph forgiven them? What is their response?
- How does Joseph acknowledge God's role in his life?
- Joseph responds by hugging, kissing and weeping with his brothers. Where do you see God's sovereignty in this story? Where do you see it in your own life?

Application Question:

- What does it mean to love our enemy?

Closing Prayer:

Share and pray for any concerns of the group.
Lord's Prayer

March 2, 2025

Transfiguration Of Our Lord

On the last Sunday after Epiphany the witnesses to the glory of God in the face of Jesus reflect that glory in the world. It was true for Moses. It was doubtless true for Peter, James, and John. We pray that it will be true of all of us who see God's glory in the word and in the supper and who are being "transformed into the same image" by God's Spirit.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, thank you for this time together. Give us guidance that we may have the wisdom to understand your word so we can have the strength and confidence to follow you. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

- As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36

The conversation about Jesus' suffering and death is enclosed in a dazzling foreshadowing of the resurrection. God affirms Jesus' identity, the disciples are stunned speechless, and Jesus resumes his mission with a demonstration of his power over evil.

Daily Discipleship: Luke 9:28-36 study **turn to pages 11-12 for the study**

Reading: Exodus 34:29-35

In Exodus 34:29-35, Moses' face shone with the reflected glory of God after he received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The sight caused the Israelites to be afraid, so Moses wore a veil to mask the radiance of God's glory, taking it off when he spoke directly with God.

- Why did Moses' face shine?
- What does his shining face say about his relationship with God?
- What purpose does the veil have?
- How do we "veil" God's glory in our lives?

Application Question:

- How can I listen more closely to Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Share and pray for any concerns of the group.
Lord's Prayer

Daily Discipleship

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (C) – Luke 5:1-11

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Follow Jesus!*

Focus Question: What is Jesus calling us to leave behind to follow him?

word of life

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now you will be catching people.’ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.” Luke 5: 10-11 (NRSV)

Read Luke 5:1-11

The ministry of Jesus took him to the Galilee area where he healed and preached. His message of good news spread to such an extent that crowds gathered and pressed upon him. Imagine such an immense crowd forcing Jesus to get on a boat in order to teach. Imagine people being so eager to hear the word of God.

1. *Describe that scene by the lakeshore.*

Jesus chose the boat of Simon for his pulpit on that day and requested Simon take him away from the shore but near enough to be heard. From the boat, Jesus taught the crowd.

2. *What would it have been like to be standing on the shore and to hear the teachings of Jesus?*
3. *What would it have been like to be in the boat with Jesus, watching both Jesus as well as the crowd?*

When Jesus finished teaching the crowd, he gave a fishing tip to Simon. It was not a new fishing technique, but rather Jesus gave some advice about the location to place the net. But Simon was tired from last evening’s fishing trip and the lack of fish caught in that very spot. Nevertheless, Simon agreed to drop his nets. What a surprise! The nets overflowed to a breaking point. Other fishermen were called to help with the bounty. Both boats became so full they began to sink. Where hours before, there were no fish, now there were plenty. This was plenty upon plenty, grace upon grace.

4. *How do you explain so many fish where the night before there was none?*
5. *What must have the crowd felt when they watched these events?*

When Simon Peter witnessed this miracle, he dropped to his knees. He knew he was in the company of a holy man. He confessed, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8 NRSV) At this point, the names of the fisherman who witnessed the miracle were revealed. Peter had been fishing with James and John, sons of Zebedee, but Jesus focuses his attention and his words to Simon. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

6. *Is fear a reasonable response to this miracle?*
7. *What else might Peter have been thinking or feeling?*
8. *What does it mean to “catch people”?*

When these three fishermen finally got on shore with their bounty of fish, they left everything and followed Jesus. Their trust and commitment ran deep, perhaps as deep as the waters of the Sea of Galilee.

9. *So what happened to all that fish?*
10. *What is more important than the bounty of fish?*
11. *What would it mean to follow Jesus in the first century?*

word among us

EVERYTHING!

The fisherman left everything to follow Jesus.

EVERYTHING!

1. *What would it mean for you to leave everything to follow Jesus today?*
2. *List some of the things you would gladly leave.*
3. *What do you hope to take with you as you follow Jesus?*

There is no doubt our modern society is much different from the first century. The quantity of things left behind by the fisherman pales in comparison to all that we have in this life. Perhaps we can rationalize that they had the benefit of being an eyewitness to the bounty of fish. Certainly, the fisherman had the advantage of actually hearing the voice of Jesus calling them to follow him. Nevertheless, they left everything!

4. *Have you ever considered leaving everything to follow Jesus?*
5. *What prevents us from leaving everything to follow?*

This passage of the call of the fisherman can be humbling for us to hear. It is easy to forget about the transformation of those early followers. Their lives were turned upside down as they sacrificed to follow Jesus as their master.

6. *How do you relate to this passage and the call of the disciples?*
7. *Does Jesus mean for us to do likewise?*
8. *In what ways is your life changing because you follow Jesus?*

The disciples did not just leave their possessions. They also left their jobs. Fishing was not just a hobby or leisure activity, but it was their livelihood.

9. *Does Jesus expect us to leave it all behind and follow him?*
10. *How do you understand the call to follow Jesus?*

Jesus calls the fishermen to a new kind of fishing where their nets and buckets are no longer needed. Instead, the fishermen will be partners with Jesus to share God's good news. They will be asked to go to new areas to fish and seek out deep waters. Their ability to catch people will not be based on their skills or their creativity but on the grace of God.

11. *Where is Jesus calling you to fish for people?*
12. *What new deep waters will your congregation fish?*
13. *How does it feel to walk with someone new in the faith?*

Prayer

Christ, you call us to follow you. Help us leave those things which distract us from you. Open our eyes to deep waters where you call us to fish and proclaim your good news. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 6:1-13

last word

Write down your priorities for the week.
Be sure to include "following Jesus".



Daily Discipleship

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5 Epiphany (C) Page 6

Daily Discipleship

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany (C) – Luke 6:17-26

Imperatives of Discipleship – Be Blessed!

Focus Question: *Knowing you are blessed by God today, how might you bless others?*

word of life

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” Luke 6:20-21 (NRSV)

Read Luke 6:17-26

The beatitudes found in the Sermon of the Mount in Matthew 5:1-11 are probably more familiar than Luke’s shorter version. Take a moment to review Matthew 5:1-11.

1. *How many beatitudes are listed in Matthew and in Luke?*
2. *Compare and contrast the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke.*

In Luke, Jesus had just spent the night on a mountain in prayer before calling the twelve disciples. He came down the mountain with the twelve only to be met with a great multitude of people from all over –Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. They came because they needed to be healed, and Jesus did just that. He healed all of them. And then Jesus taught them.

3. *In what ways does Jesus heal?*
4. *How might the beatitudes heal a person?*

Jesus blesses those in the crowd who are poor, hungry, and weeping as well as those who are hated because of a connection to himself.

5. *What surprises you about these blessings?*

For each of the blessings, there is a parallel in the woes. Blessed are the poor, woe are the rich; blessed are the hungry, woe are those who are full; blessed are those who weep, woe to those who laugh; and blessed are those followers when they are persecuted, woe to those when all speak well. These words are not some distant blessings and woes, but note the emphasis on *now!* Yet anyone who has been poor, hungry, or grieving might be hard pressed to identify the blessing in those experiences. They ache for the presence of blessing.

6. *Are these blessings and woes for today or some distant future? Why?*
7. *Why didn’t Jesus soften these a bit?*
8. *What makes these beatitudes and woes so difficult for us to read in this century?*

Take time to read Deuteronomy 11:26-28. Note the clear delineation between a blessing and a curse. There is no middle ground. Jesus builds on this tradition and offers God’s words of blessings and woes. These are not suggestions, but they become a present reality and a future hope as Jesus proclaims it.

This favoring of the poor was introduced in Luke’s Gospel in Mary’s song of the Magnificat found in Luke 1:46-56. It is a theme throughout Luke’s Gospel.

9. *What does it mean to be blessed?*
10. *What does it mean to be cursed?*

word among us

It took a while for the older man to make a final decision on his purchase. At the cash register, the clerk handed the change to the man and offered him these words, “Be blessed!” The man simply nodded his head and slowly walked away. There was no “Goodbye!” or “Have a nice day!”

“Be blessed!” seems to be catching on as people say their farewells to each other. For some people, it gives them something new to think about as they walk away.

1. *Have you ever heard someone bless you in this manner? How did it feel?*
2. *What might those words mean to someone lonely or in despair?*

The beatitudes in Luke are words of paradox which seem to go against our common experiences of comfort and blessing. They echo themes of comfort and blessing, yet they challenge people and appear to exclude some from being blessed. Jesus apparently favors the poor, hungry and sad. How can this be? It sounds unfair to those with financial means or those who enjoy themselves. Also, Jesus appears critical to those who speak well of a person. Plus it is unclear if he means this blessing is for today or the future.

3. *How is someone who is poor, hungry, mourning, or persecuted blessed today?*
4. *How might that person be blessed in the future?*
5. *Is Jesus serious about the woes? How so?*

William K. McElvaney in his book, Good news is bad news is good news. . . writes “As I get in touch with my own years, I realize that it took me a long time to come to one of the major discoveries of my life: namely, *that God loves me enough to disturb me. . .* for me the gospel has been like a Roto-Rooter, churning through my resistances and turning my presuppositions and priorities upside down.” He describes this as “blessed disturbance” and compares it to the words of the song “Blessed Assurance.”

6. *How has God ever disturbed you out of a comfort level?*
7. *How does God offer you comfort and assurance?*
8. *How does God bless us in the process of disturbing us?*

Blessings come in all different shapes and sizes. Sometimes as we experience tragedy, illness, or difficulty, we learn to count our blessings differently. A kind word or a cup of coffee feels like heaven. Those times when we are stripped bare compel us to no longer take for granted those around us. At least for a while, we savor the moment. The day we are living becomes the gift, a treasure granted to us by God. On this day, we are blessed because God is the one who sustains us by sending the Holy Spirit to comfort us and give us hope. The presence of Christ is felt as the body of Christ extends acts of kindness and love. We are blessed *now*.

9. *Ponder a difficult time when God has blessed you.*
10. *Take a moment to give thanks for God’s blessings.*

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you blessing our lives. Continue to disturb us when we become complacent.
Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 5:1-11

last word

This week, end each of your conversations with the words, “Be Blessed!”



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6 Epiphany (C) Page 8

Daily Discipleship

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany (C) – Luke 6:27-38

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Love your Enemy!*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to love our enemy?*

word of life

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” (Luke 6:27 NRSV)

Read Luke 6:27-38

In the Gospel of Luke, prayer is the center of the life of Jesus. In chapter six, Luke describes Jesus ascending to the top of the mountain to pray. In fact, he spends the whole night in prayer to God. On the next day, Jesus calls his disciples together and chooses twelve to be his apostles.

Then Jesus descends the mountain and stands on level ground with a crowd of his disciples from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre, Sidon and many other places. They came to be healed of their diseases and troubles, trying to touch Jesus and receive some of his mighty, healing power.

Jesus heals, but he also teaches the crowd. This teaching on the plain is also found in the Gospel of Matthew, but is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. Whether Jesus is on a level field or a mount, he begins with a series of blessings (beatitudes) followed by an invitation to listen to the heart of his message.

1. *Describe that scene on the plain as Jesus healed and taught.*
2. *If you attended that event, how would you have responded to Jesus and his teaching?*

Jesus wastes no time and gets to the heart of his teaching with these imperatives, “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” (Luke 6:27 NRSV) The list of imperatives also includes: Turn your cheek to those who hurt you, share your coat with those who steal from you, give to everyone who begs from to you and “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31 NRSV)

3. *Which of these imperatives is the most challenging for you? How so?*
4. *Why are the teachings of Jesus so challenging?*

Jesus knows it is easy to love those in our life who are likable and loveable. Anyone can do that. Instead, Jesus calls his followers to another standard—an impossible one at that. Jesus expects his followers to love their enemies and anticipate absolutely nothing in return. Jesus expects his followers to not judge and condemn, but to forgive. Jesus expects his followers to show mercy just as God has shown mercy to each of us.

It is no wonder that Jesus begins with the words, “But I say to you that listen...” Once followers hear these expectations, many stop listening. To follow Jesus is simply too difficult and radical. Who loves their enemy? Who does good to those who hate them? Who turns the other cheek? Who prays for those abuse you? Who forgives the enemy? Who shows mercy? Jesus does.

Jesus does not ask for anything which he does not embody. He is the standard. We are humbled by the expectations. Left to our limited human abilities, we cannot do as Jesus asks of us. His imperatives drive us to prayer to the One who empowers us. We can live out these expectations only by the grace of God.

5. *How would you describe these expectations?*

word *among us*

Who loves their enemy? Who does good to those who hate them?
Who turns the other cheek? Who prays for those who abuse them?
Who forgives the enemy? Who shows mercy?

Jesus does. Of course. Jesus loves, does good, turns the other cheek, prays for those who abuse him, forgives and shows mercy. Jesus is divine. And we most certainly are not.

1. *Should we be held by the same standard of Jesus?*
2. *Why might Jesus want us to live in such radical ways?*

Most would agree that the imperatives of Jesus run contrary to society and our own natural responses. In reality, there is a certain fire in the belly when we have a chance to embrace our righteous anger. That may be true as we fume at a traffic light, waiting for the car in front of us to move. There is a certain satisfaction as we harbor hurt feelings from childhood or feel resentment sparked by the words of a colleague, friend or family member. But that anger can also fester like an open wound.

When Jesus teaches about loving our enemies, he is not teaching a theory. Simply review the final week of his life. Jesus applies his teaching when he faces his enemies—those who abuse him, plot his death, and kill him. Consistently, Jesus turns the other cheek, does not retaliate, and does not judge. Despite it all, he loves. As he faces physical abuse and his own death, Jesus chooses another path.

3. *Describe how Jesus modeled his imperatives during the final week of his life.*

There is no doubt the love which Jesus expects from his followers is a divine love, born in prayer and gratitude. Our actions begin with a clear understanding of how God has already showed love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace to us. Our hope to live as Jesus is rooted in God's mighty and healing Spirit which has already begun to work in our lives, setting us on a path of transformation where there is no room for hatred, revenge, or judgement.

4. *What would our life be like without any hatred, revenge, or judgment?*
5. *What might take their place?*

Jesus does not expect us to live this radical life on our own, but gives the Holy Spirit to empower us with the strength and wisdom to face our challenges as well as other followers of Christ who encourage and remind us of this unique calling of divine love.

6. *How are we changed as we try to forgive and show mercy?*
7. *What role does prayer have in our life as we pursue the path of divine love?*

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for holding us to such high standards. To be honest, sometimes we don't want to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. We confess our shortcomings to you. Shape and mold us in the image of Christ. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 5:43-48

last word

This week be intentional about praying for your enemies—both near and far.



Daily Discipleship

Written by Robin McCullough-Bade

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Daily Discipleship

Transfiguration (C) – Luke 9:28-43

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Listen!*

Focus Question: *How can I listen more closely to Jesus?*

word of life

“This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.” Luke 9:35 (NRSV)

Read Luke 9:28-43

There is a saying that in real estate, the three most important things are location, location, location. The same might be said today as we seek to reflect and understand the meaning of Luke’s account of Jesus’ transfiguration: location is everything!

The physical location where the event occurs is “the mountain” (vs. 28). The specific mountain is not named, nor does it seem important to the account. It is not unusual to identify “the mountain” in Scripture as the place of divine revelation. It is on the mountaintop that Moses meets God and is given the 10 Commandments. (See today’s first lesson from Exodus 34:29-35 and Exodus 19:3.) It is on the mountain of the Lord where all nations will come to learn the Lord’s ways (Isaiah 2:2-3). Nor is it unusual in Luke’s gospel for Jesus to withdraw to a place apart to pray. (See Luke 3:21, 6:12, 9:18, 11:1.) The mountaintop is the place set apart to listen, to discern God’s will, and to experience God’s presence.

1. *Where do you go to experience God’s presence and discern God’s will?*
2. *What makes an event a “mountaintop” experience?*

Just as the physical location is important in understanding today’s reading, so too is the location of the story within the Gospel of Luke. The transfiguration gives divine confirmation to all that has taken place in the verses preceding it:

- * Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ (Luke 9:18-20) is validated. Jesus’ appearance is changed, and a heavenly voice clearly identifies Jesus as God’s Son, God’s Chosen One (vs. 35).
- * The first of Jesus’ “passion predictions” – Jesus telling his disciples of his impending suffering and death (Luke 9:21-22) – is confirmed. The sudden appearance of two men before Peter, James, and John (vs. 30) will be echoed at the resurrection (Luke 24:4) and ascension (Acts 1:10) of Jesus. The topic of conversation between Jesus and these men (identified as Moses and Elijah and uniquely recorded only in Luke) is of Jesus’ “departure” (literally, his “exodus”) which he is to accomplish in Jerusalem (vs. 31). The account of sleepy disciples on a mountainside trying to stay awake while Jesus prays will be heard again in the story of Jesus’ agony on the Mount of Olives (22:39-46) the night before his crucifixion and death.

Yes, Peter, your words are true: Jesus is the Christ, God’s chosen, beloved Son. Yes, James and John, Jesus’ words are true: God’s chosen one will suffer, die, and be resurrected from the dead. “So, listen to him,” the heavenly voice says, “listen to him!” (vs. 35)

3. *What does it mean for Peter to confess Jesus is the Messiah?*

The location of the transfiguration account also gives meaning to what is to follow. Jesus speaks the second passion prediction, admonishing his disciples to “let the words sink into your ears” (Luke 9:44); and then Jesus “sets his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). The shining, penetrating clarity of Jesus’ glory gives Jesus and his followers of every age the strength to “face Jerusalem.” Only after his death and resurrection did his disciples truly hear and understand.

4. *Why is it so difficult to listen to God?*
5. *What gets in the way of our hearing?*

word among us

“Remember this day. And listen to what I’m telling you right now, because you’re going to need it when things get tough.”

The dean of the school looked each new graduate directly in the eye, emphasizing her point to the new medical residents who were under her instruction. Hours had been spent in the classrooms studying the textbooks. Days of work had been done in the lab. Weeks had been spent in review and tests. They knew so much; but they had so much yet to learn.

“Listen to me,” she said again. “Today is a great day. You’ve been accepted into one of the best medical programs in the country. I want you to remember today. Remember not only what you have been taught, but remember what you have been called to be and the oath you have taken.

“There will be days ahead when you’ll wonder why you went into this profession, days when things will go wrong, days when you’ll make mistakes, days when you’ll fail. When those days come – and they will surely come – mark my words well – remember this day.”

1. *What gives you strength when faced with difficult days?*

Jesus knew of tough days ahead. He knew of coming betrayal and sorrow. He saw the cross in the distance for himself. He knew the grief and loss looming ahead for his disciples. He knew. And as he faced Jerusalem, he knew God’s loving embrace and affirmation – “This is my Son, the Chosen.”

2. *What makes the memory of “mountain-top” experiences so helpful during tough days?*
3. *How can we keep alive those memories?*
4. *What words do we need God to whisper in our ears to encourage us?*

We, too, know days when things go wrong, when we make mistakes, when we fail. We know that Ash Wednesday is just a few days away; we see the shadow of death on the horizon. And so we are called to listen in order to find strength for the coming journey. Hear the good news that the one whom we follow is none other than God’s own Son. Hear of the depth of God’s great love that would give God’s beloved Jesus to die for us. Hear Jesus’ promise to walk the journey before and beside us, through the grief and sorrow of death and into the promised resurrection.

For we, too, have been called and claimed as a child of God. We, too, live under the shadow of the cross of Jesus – a symbol of death which gives us life. We see the brightness of the transfigured and resurrected Christ in the distance. And he calls us to trust and to follow.

Listen to him. His words are trustworthy and true. His word is a lamp and a light on the difficult journey of life. Listen to him.

5. *Take a moment to listen in silence to Jesus.*
6. *Write down on a piece of paper the words of Jesus to you.*

Prayer

O God, open our hearts and our minds to hear, understand, trust, and believe your promises. Amen

Dig Deeper

Exodus 34:29-35

last word

Listen this week
for the sounds of God’s love in your life.



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Transfiguration (C) Page 12



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