

Those Aha! Moments©

2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2 Luke 9:28–36

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Where do you get strength? When things are down and out and everything seems to be falling apart, how have you found strength and the determination to keep going, to plow through?

I've been thinking a lot about why we even think its necessary (we church-type people) to observe the traditional Christian calendar – why spend so much time on Advent or Lent? We already know Jesus was born so why not just celebrate Christmas?

Most of us believe that something happened on that first Easter when the tomb of Jesus was found empty – so why not skip the 40 days of reflection and fasting or whatever you choose to do or give up? Why not just sing the “Alleluias?” and be happy, for goodness sake!

And we've heard about this transfiguration experience so many times – just about every year before Lent begins – why continue to do the same things over and over?

Recently, I talked some about Ordinary Time and what that was about.

Ordinary Time is a piece of that Christian calendar I referred to a moment ago. Just as our lives have moments of great celebrations – births, weddings, anniversaries, vacations – big events that require special focus for a short time – we also have more ordinary days than anything else.

We get up, feed the pets, feed ourselves, go to work and school, we do the chores, we go to lunch, we come home, we run kids around – whatever is our ordinary routine –

As one of the soap opera introductions says: “Like sands in an hourglass, these are the days of our lives.” Some days are great, some are not so great, and some are just plain exhausting. But they are still ordinary.

But sometimes, right in the middle of an ordinary day, we get a sudden glimpse of something very special – something that gives us hope, joy, meaning. It might be a phone call, or a picture of a grandchild standing in the living room wearing his Spidey PJ's, arms out stretched as if he were going to fly.

It might be a compliment or hug. It could be a special prayer someone says for you. It could be receiving forgiveness when you've caused someone to hurt. It could be good news about a medical test.

Ordinary days can suddenly be extraordinary with some unexpected event.

And that is sometimes just what we needed to take us through the rest of the day or week with strength and faith.

This is what I think can happen with our faith life as we move from seasons of Ordinary Time into other seasons in the church – Lent being the one coming very soon.

Lent is a time for us to think again – to put more thought into what Jesus' death really means for us and to consider where we are in our beliefs about what happened at the cross. There are questions to reflect on during Lent:

- What does Jesus' death have to do with my faith?
- Does it have anything to do with me, today?

- How is it that Jesus' death made salvation possible?
- And what is salvation? Forgiveness of sins? Eternal life?

These are the questions of our faith, as Christians. And doesn't sorting out our answers lead to our being stronger disciples of the one we say we follow – Jesus, the Christ?

If we have a clear vision of who He is and what we believe, the celebration of his resurrection takes on new meaning that has the possibility of transforming our lives.

Surely the event of the transfiguration is one of those strengthening, unexpected moments as well. Life, in the ordinary days, for Jesus and the disciples was about healing great crowds of people and preaching and being up against those who would want to kill them.

Feeding 5,000 people on a hillside was certainly a different day than what we know as ordinary. But those kinds of things were typical in a day of Jesus life on earth.

But to get a way for a time of prayer and rest, Jesus asks 3 of his closest friends – Peter, James and John – to go up to the mountaintop with him to pray. Feeding 5,000 people would be exhausting for anyone. Just the stress of it all – trying to stretch 5 loaves and 2 fish – would be trying, to say the least!

After that event, Peter makes his declaration of faith saying that he believes Jesus is the Messiah of God – the promised one. But Jesus quickly instructed him and the others not to say that out in the crowds.

And he went on to tell them he would be killed, and to warn them that anyone who chooses to follow him would find it very difficult. It would not be an easy road to walk. In fact, some would lose their lives as well. Being a disciple is costly, he said.

But here is what happened up on that mountain. Reading Luke 9:28-36:

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

It was an ordinary day with a sudden, unexpected extraordinary happening! Why? Why did this vision of Jesus glimmering glory happen?

It surely was a help, don't you think, in the days to come when Jesus would be arrested, tried and nailed to a cross as if he would be the worst criminal in the world?

Surely, even though Peter denied even knowing Jesus, the night of his arrest, surely this glimpse of who Jesus really is, gave him courage to stay around and not flee the country completely. Surely it helped him to ask for forgiveness and become the rock of the building of the church that would last into and beyond our generation.

But perhaps this glimpse of glory and the visit with the 2 key Old Testament leaders – Moses and Elijah – was as much for Jesus as for anyone. Peter, James and John were witnesses to the conversation.

They were talking about another exodus – the one where Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, would leave the earth, but not before great suffering as he would sacrifice his own life for the lives of all the world.

Perhaps this event – this glimpse of glory – was especially a strengthening for Jesus' journey through the last very difficult days of his life.

We too, need glimpses of his glory, don't we? We, at times, need extra strength to endure the things of life that get to be wearisome – loads of burdens to carry – those times when we do not get good reports from the doctor – times when we worry about our children or grandchildren, when life is suddenly taken away, when jobs are lost and fear threatens to overcome – those things of ordinary days that cause us humans to be on our own dark journey.

We need to know we are not alone; we need a glimpse of God's glory to give us encouragement to go on. We need that Aha moment, when we suddenly have our eyes open to something beyond the ordinary!

And that is why our faith is so important. God, who sent the Son to die for us, to love us and to be with us gives us this hope in the Bible as we read and as we focus on these days – ordinary days and special events – celebrations and laments.

But God has also given us another special glimpse of his glory – the shining, transforming glow of the love of God that is seen on the faces of his people! That is what Paul says in this letter to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 3:18): “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

It is why it's so important to be a part of the church – to belong to a church family. We are transformed through our faith in Jesus Christ as the one who has the power to forgive sins, to be raised from the dead and to give us new life as well.

Because of this transformation, we live with glory shining in our faces, with hope in the midst of darkness. We are a light shining for each other – giving glimpses of the promise that God's presence is here to strengthen and to heal.

Will you walk with me on the journey of Lent? Will you give your time and seriously consider with me what this death of Jesus means in our lives – for our sakes and for the sake of others? The voice from God said, for Peter, James and John to hear – “This is my son, my chosen. Listen to Him!”

As we, once again, begin the Lenten Journey, following Jesus' footsteps up the mountain for prayer, I believe we will be blessed and that our continuous transformation will be a result.

If we will take the time, in our ordinary, busy lives, to listen, to open ourselves to that mountain top experience ... that place where, even if it's just for a few moments ... we too have an aha moment ... a time of “seeing” the glory of Christ. We too will be strengthened and prepared for what our ordinary lives might bring next.

May God bless our small sacrifice of study and prayer. Amen.