

Matthew 17:1-9

3-D Vision©
Transfiguration
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In the summer of 2010 I came to Michigan to visit my daughter, Annie, and her family. I went to see *Despicable Me* two days in a row that week. First, for the First Annual Andrew and Gram day and then the following day we did almost the exact same thing for the First Annual Izzy and Gram day.

The thing is, I was kind of saving my money as best I could ... trying to stretch it out on that vacation and I didn't think we needed to see it in 3-D. The fact is, I really didn't think it would make that much difference. (Goes to show you how little I know about these things, doesn't it?)

Well, last summer, I actually ended up seeing *Despicable Me 2* two days in a row! Our grandchildren from Oklahoma – Dylan and Natalie – were visiting and the movie we wanted to see wasn't playing so *Despicable Me 2* was the choice. Again, we did not see it in 3-D.

But, the very next day, we were going to be with the Michigan grandchildren, all of us together, and they had not yet seen *Despicable Me 2* so that was what we saw – again.

This time, they talked me into 3-D. Wow! Did you see those Minions practically jumping out of the screen at you? And all those flying things? It was as if we were right there in the midst of the whole thing – not just sitting up in a seat observing. It seemed like we were a part of the action. It was reality. A depth perception that created a virtual reality.

As I was thinking about, and getting this picture of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, the thought came to me that it was maybe a little like a vision in 3-D. With my weird sense of humor I then imagined Peter, James and John wearing 3-D glasses while they saw this miracle right in their midst.

I mean, they go up on the mountain with Jesus and he looks the same as always and then suddenly he is changed – really changed! Matthew says, "His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white." And then, of all things, two men from the biblical past appear with Jesus, talking to him.

There is Moses, the one God called to free the Israelites from slavery, who led them into the wilderness with the promise of a land of milk and honey – all for them. It was Moses who was on the mountain when God gave him the Law – the 10 Commandments.

And there is Elijah, the prophet who raised the dead and brought fire down from the sky; Elijah who fiercely defended the worship of the one true God – Yahweh. Elijah who

was taken up to the heavens in a whirlwind, never to be seen again but always expected to return – so strong is that expectation that even today there is a place at the Passover Seder saved just for Elijah.

Peter is fumbling for words and wondering what to do, so maybe for lack of having any experience with this kind of thing before, he starts talking about setting up three dwelling places for them. Actually, the Greek word used here is *skene*, which can mean a tent, or a temporary shelter; or it can mean tabernacle – a place of worship (a place where God dwells). Or *skene* can mean a house – a permanent place to live.

Maybe he was just trying to be thoughtful, or maybe Peter was on such an emotional high (like a “mountaintop experience”) that he did not ever want it to end so he offers to build a shrine to preserve the moment forever.

But while he was talking, he was interrupted – not by one of his peers (James or John) and not by one of the three divine figures, but from God himself! I’m thinking when God interrupts you really better stop talking.

As we have read in the Old Testament about times when God came to the people in a cloud of fire, again God comes in a bright cloud that overshadows them, and just as we heard at Jesus’ baptism, we hear again today the voice of God that says “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; ***listen to him!***”

And the disciples – Peter and James and John – were so frightened they fell to the ground.

When the cloud was gone, it was just Jesus there with them; Jesus who put his hand upon them and said, “Get up. Don’t be afraid.”

“Do not be afraid.” Those are the words that I imagine rang in the ears of those disciples numerous times in the weeks and months and years that followed. For there would be many times to be afraid: as they watched Judas leave the table to go and betray the Lord; later that night in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus cried and prayed; when the soldiers came and arrested Jesus.

And what about Peter the next morning – Peter who was so sure he would never turn his back on Jesus – yet, three times he denied even knowing him. And John, at the foot of the cross with Mary, watching Jesus die a cruel death. At the tomb where his body had been laid, now empty. At the appearance of Jesus raised from the dead.

Yes, there would be plenty of times where fear would rise up to consume them, but surely they heard those words from this mountain top moment – “Get up. Do not be afraid.”

Which why I suspect this event was so important. Even going down the mountain they were already hearing about Jesus' death and resurrection. The mountain top experience was one that gave them a glimpse of the Messiah, the true Son of God in all his divine glory.

To see the Old Testament figures who represented the Law and the Prophets talking to Jesus and then to have them gone was surely something they would never forget. In the past they listened to Moses and Elijah and all the prophets but now they know Jesus is the one to listen to, the one with the ultimate authority.

This was an experience like no other. It was a transformational moment. The Greek word for transformation is *metamorphoomai*. It's where we get the word *metamorphous* as in the change happening inside a chrysalis; the caterpillar becoming a butterfly.

It was a transforming moment for Jesus, certainly, as he changed right before the eyes of those three disciples but I believe it had to be a transformational moment for Peter, James and John as well.

Who could see this 3-D vision and not be changed to the very depths of their being?

They were eye witnesses to glory that would strengthened them for the journey ahead.

They would need to have a very firm, very strong 3- D Vision, although the 3-D I'm referring to is not a movie, not a virtual reality, but it is about real qualities for real life:

The 3-D that were necessary for Peter, James and John were:

Discipleship, Devotion, and Dialog

They had to be *Disciples* who had learned so well from Jesus that they would be able to carry his message on to others; they would be so *Devoted* to him that they would put their own lives on the line for the ministry and indeed would lose their lives for Jesus' sake someday.

And they would need to have *Dialog* – to be grounded in prayer as Jesus was, and to dialog with one another, and then with all as they told the Good News.

Those are the 3-D's that were really important in this story. *Discipleship, Devotion and Dialog*. And we too, should put on our own 3-D Vision. That is:

First, to be focused and strong in our *Discipleship* as we follow Jesus on this Lenten journey ahead, and of course, even for the rest of our lives.

Second, to be *Devoted* to Jesus – who gives us grace, forgiveness, love and joy – who gives us courage and encouragement.

Third, to have *Dialog* – to pray, to study his Word, and hear him say to us, even as he said to Peter, James and John – “Get up, and do not be afraid.”

Let’s go! Whatever we face, we face together; whatever is before us, Jesus goes with us and, in fact, has gone ahead of us; It will all be okay in the end. Easter is coming! We are resurrection people!

As we turn our faces toward the journey to the cross, getting ready for the passion of Lent, let us walk with 3-D Vision – as growing *Disciples*; as people who are *devoted* to the Christ; and let us often be in *dialog* (in prayer) with God and in dialog with one another about the journey.

Ash Wednesday, this coming Wednesday, begins our Lenten Journey – this year in 3-D. And even as we know we will face somber times on the Lenten Journey and certainly in our lives, let us always hear the voice of the one who is the Son of God saying – “Get up. Do not be afraid.” Let’s go!

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