

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

FEBRUARY 11, 2024



## DAZZLING

*what you see and what you get*

by Drew Downs

We often approach the Transfiguration of Jesus by thinking it is about how things *look*. Which we contrast with how things *are*. Much like we compare the word *transfigure* to another word: transform.

This comparison is neither fair nor true. Looking different is also being different.

Jesus's appearance dazzles those who witness it. Which confounds and confuses

them. But it also frightens and disturbs them. Precisely because the spectacle itself marks a change in their reality. In short: Jesus may look different, but it also means that their world is different.

While the dazzling spectacles that make up transfigurations always astound us, it is the resulting confusion and fear that distract us. Because if we honestly believed this is merely cosmetic, then what are we so afraid of?

# EPIPHANY

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

**Lent is almost here!**

As we move from the season after Epiphany, we enter the season of Lent. This season is known for its penitential character; and for people feeling the need to "give things up". These are part of the tradition of Lent.

The central theme of Lent, however, is learning. Or, to put it more theological language, discernment.

The earliest followers set this season apart as the season to prepare newcomers and to prepare the congregation for change and adaptation. We are to learn during this time about our faith—and about ourselves.

We are once again learning about the saints by participating in the festive *Lent Madness* phenomenon.

And we will explore Revelation in our weekly *Potluck and Apocalypse* on Sunday nights at 6 pm. Sign up on the website if you plan to join us!

And be here Tuesday, February 13th at 5:30 pm for our annual pancake supper as we celebrate one last time before Lent!

Then come back Wednesday, February 14th at noon or 6 pm for Ash Wednesday services in the chapel. This is our annual reminder of the nature of the season and invitation to keep a holy Lent. Please join us for as much as you can!

With love,  
Drew

# EPIPHANY

2024

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Last Sunday after the Epiphany B*

February 11, 2024

### Collect

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### Reading

Mark 9:2-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

# EPIPHANY

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## Reflection

What these three disciples witness on the mountaintop is beyond most of our comprehension, I suspect. And much like the disciples themselves, our focus is obscured, and perhaps misdirected.

There is a spectacular character to it—the dazzling light, the appearance of prophetic elders long gone. And importantly, the confusion about how to respond we witness from the disciples. These elements produce a grandiosity long before we hear the holy pronouncement about Jesus which mirrors the baptism.

In short, we are dumbfounded by the spectacle. Just like Peter, James, and John. But their response is not so much awe and joy—but terror and confusion. And in hearing Peter try to figure out how he is supposed to respond, I could imagine any one of us doing the same.

*What is the right thing to do? What should I say? How can I impress Jesus?*

We can see how natural that confusion is: we live it, too.

I suspect that Jesus doesn't expect his followers to be without confusion. Or even fear. At least, not completely. After all, his reminder is so often to let go of the fear *because they already are afraid*.

It is their fear—so commonly of doing things wrong—that prevents them from doing the work Jesus calls them to. It is this same fear that prevents the others from healing a boy at the foot of the mountain.

What God offers in Jesus is clarity in the midst of confusion. This means that the work itself is the point—not how confused we are about our present moment.

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