

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

February 15, 2026



TRANSFIGURE

where seeing meets believing

by Drew Downs

In the modern world, seeing, the observation of our environment, is often a fundamental requirement of faith. "I'll believe it when I see it," we say. We're all a bit like Thomas. And yet we also will say "I'm seeing things" to imply that we are not only able to observe what is real, but ought not trust our sight because it can deceive us! We want to speak to some kind of objective reality that is beyond our sight, alone, but exists as matter in time and space.

Strange thing then, having to wrestle with the highly improbable and the visual and the incredible experience of the Transfiguration in which nothing seems to change materially and yet we are left to consider that, in fact, everything has changed. And then, it isn't just appearance or light which obscures the disciple's vision of Jesus momentarily, but, as we will see later in the story, that it is themselves who obscure their own vision of the Jesus before them.

AFTER EPIPHANY

2026

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!

A Creative Lent

Next week will mark the beginning of Lent — a penitential season famous for a time of discipline and reflection. A season in which we often give something up or take something on for many weeks, like miniature New Year's resolutions. But it is primarily a season whose purpose befits an old word like atonement. A time in which we attend to our disconnection and work to make it less so. Or, to put it another way, to try to prepare and make ourselves worthy for God's transforming the world in the resurrection.

One way we can reconnect with God and one another is by engaging in creative acts which invite reflection, intention, and bravery through intentional acts or patterns of behavior.

Each Sunday, from February 22 to March 22, we will have "Messy Church" which is a time of semi-social, semi-public creativity. Bring what you need to create: markers, paper, canvas, instrument, yarn, and we will gather for reflection, creativity, and sharing. And if you don't think you're creative, I'll lead a weekly group called Poetry For People Who Don't Write Poetry.

We will also have a youth gathering (for current grades 6th through 12th) each Sunday at 1:00 and an adult inquirer's gathering at 2:00.

We are offered this time with intention, to learn and grow. To use this time to prepare our hearts for the resurrection to come!

With love,
Drew+

AFTER EPIPHANY

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Epiphany Last A

February 15, 2026

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

Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

AFTER EPIPHANY

Reflection

There is much that draws our attention in this passage we call the Transfiguration. The dazzling light, the appearance of other people, Peter's response, the voice of God! And yet, it is hard not to center our own response on the words of God! When God speaks, we must listen!

The words we receive match the words at the baptism: God calls Jesus "beloved" and speaks to being pleased. But the final statement is new: "listen to him." And it these words which, I think, draw out a deeper question within us than we care to consider. Does this statement not imply that, either up till this point or at this very moment, they aren't? Or, perhaps, that we, in our own lives, reading this gospel today — and not just in the sense of centuries later, but in the literal sense, *today* — are not listening or are in danger of missing something?

When I hear "listen to him" I get literal and figurative and metaphorical. I try to hear it all! And so I listen for the words that Jesus will say in the next moments *and* in the coming days. Like a disciple, watching and ascribing meaning to everything I see, thinking, yes, *but what does he mean by this?* and so on. And Jesus's immediate words are "Get up and do not be afraid," which are fantastic. Because they are on the ground and he is telling them to quite literally get off of the ground and subdue that fear impulse. And also — we are there, too, being told the same thing. To get up. And not be afraid. And I think most of us need to translate that a bit, but can come up with a pretty solid response that is better than "do I have to?" Yep. God says listen.

But the listening shouldn't end there. A lot of stuff is happening around them in the story and the disciples are getting distracted and thinking they know better than Jesus and are getting awfully full of themselves, declaring other people heretics. And this message to listen — *listen to him!* — keeps being the message that the disciples struggle to hear. Do we?

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