

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

March 2, 2025



TRANSFIGURED

we are more than what we look like

by Drew Downs

Jesus takes three disciples up a mountain to join him in a moment of profound spectacle. There they witness Jesus's face being *transfigured* — a word that suggests that his appearance is changed. Church people have long resisted the idea that Jesus would be *transformed* here, which is to say, not substantively changed. But this response is too fixed in Enlightenment and binary thought, for a transfigured appearance is something of some substance.

I suspect we want to know how this changes things — and I suspect it is less a change for Jesus, but for how these three disciples see and treat him. That his changed appearance inspires them to see him in a new way, as one of a different character and makeup than they assumed. The outside now reveals something *else* about him than before. And in seeing him, the disciples take note. Their confusion is cut through by a voice, to listen to him. He's still the one.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

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!

The End. And After.

Many of us picked up an idea along the way that pain is something we must avoid — self-preservation, we might call it. Others learned to confront that pain head on. At least when it comes to *certain* pains. Pains like the human existential crisis of climate change are hard to bear on on the mind and in the heart.

In his newest book, *Life After Doom*, Brian D. McLaren invites us to face the very question of the end of life as we know it — and what life can spring from this very act of confronting. I have found the book inspiring and relieving. As it invites me to stop such avoidance, I'm able to more engage with the living and my own responsibility for those around me. The book is a revelation to me — in every sense of the word. And I am so grateful for it that I want to invite others on this journey with me.

Starting March 6, please join me for a 13-week journey into life after doom, in which we explore what it means to truly live in this moment, not avoiding our present reality, but in full acknowledgement of it and taking responsibility for living and loving now.

This journey will include online and in-person check-ins as we work our way through the book, starting with the Introduction and Chapter 1 for our first gathering on Zoom (March 6). The book can be found anywhere books are sold. Scholarships for books are available.

With love,
Drew+

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Epiphany Last C

March 2, 2025

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

Luke 9:28-36, [37-43a]

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.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

[On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.]

Reflection

The striking theme running through this gospel story we call the Transfiguration is one of fear and disappointment from Peter's failure to understand the moment up the mountain to the rest of the disciples' failure to heal the man's child of an unclean spirit. As much as we see the glory of God through Jesus in dazzling white, the human mistakes threaten to overshadow the grace, contrasting glory with a seeming incompetence.

In the midst of this conflict and confusion, we have the voice of God offer a word of profound and prescient clarity: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the enormity of it all; of the majestic, the frustrating, the confusing. Like Peter, we might not know what to do; worrying, frightened of making a mistake, or so desirous of doing "the right thing" that we stumble into planning when we ought to be listening. But this is our first work: listening to Jesus. Listening to his voice, his words, his actions, his teachings, his presence with us in the now and trusting that will reveal something like a response.

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