

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



AUGUST 6, 2023

## APPEARANCE

*the value and depth of how we look*

by Drew Downs

When I was in 6th grade, I wanted to shave the sides of my head. This was long before the viking look, and it was not at all a normal look. For me, it was a bit of pre-teen rebellion: a bit of pre-punkness.

My Mom wouldn't let me. But I think it was more that she didn't understand what I wanted. And I, for my part, wasn't secure enough to push for it. I wanted to stand out and fit in. Both. At the same time.

We somehow over- and under-sell how our appearance communicates to other people. How important and unimportant it is. As we say, it is only skin-deep. But it is also a marker of identity and value.

When we show ourselves to the world, especially an image of change, we truly are sharing something deep about ourselves. So then we present ourselves, not for judgement, but to be known.

# ORDINARY TIME

2023

## 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!

### Special

In this week's gospel, Jesus takes three of his disciples up a mountain with him. Who knows what he told them would happen there, but there is little doubt that they thought they were getting special time with their master.

This time away with him is special. The miraculous events are special. And in the end, not only are they going to experience it alone, but they are told to not talk about it—until he's gone.

How much do you want to bet that getting this special time with Jesus made these three disciples *feel* special?

Of course, tradition has ensured that we actually do treat these three as special. Peter gets the keys and James and John assume proximity. In the later years, all three would remain distinguished by tradition.

However, there is a huge difference between assuming a special place in the group and in feeling special. Pride, for one. But more importantly, one creates a comparison with others and the other a comparison with one's self.

Acting like we're special is problematic. Precisely because of how such a vision encourages us to treat other people: as below us. Feeling special—like we have something to contribute—doesn't negate the specialness of others. It affords the opportunity for all of us to be special. Because, in God's eyes, we are.

With love,  
Drew

# ORDINARY TIME

2023

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## FOR SUNDAY

*The Transfiguration*

August 6, 2023

### **Collect**

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; 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

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.

# PENTECOST

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## Reflection

This passage is known as The Transfiguration, for Jesus's appearance was *transfigured* by God. Nobody actually expects you to know what that word means, though. I've never heard it used in any other context.

In one way, *transfigured* seems akin to *transformed*, which does reveal something about it, doesn't it? The writer is describing Jesus's *appearance* changing.

This highlights two different ideas to ponder.

One is about substance. Is an appearance changing different than the substance itself changing? In a sense, we change our appearance all the time and don't consider it a *substantive* change. But should we make that assumption here?

The other is about permanence. When something is transformed, we assume it is changed forever. Or at least until it gets changed again. Does this transfiguring suggest something different? Something less? The light goes away, so Jesus doesn't *seem* to be different, does he?

While we know this moment is important, I suspect most assume this is all show—a spectacle of lights and illusion—but nothing real. That it mirrors the baptism, when Jesus becomes the Messiah, should remind us the weakness of that assumption.

There is a lot we dare not assume here. Most significant is that before they go up the mountain, the twelve share the power of Jesus with the world. After it, others do.

When we focus on what is changing with Jesus, we might miss what is changing with the world.

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