

## Transfiguration Sunday

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

Give me that old time religion  
Give me that old time religion  
Give me that old time religion  
And **it's** good enough for me.

It was good for Paul and Silas  
It was good for Paul and Silas  
If **it's** good for Paul and Silas  
Then **it's** good enough for me.

Give me that old time religion  
Give me that old time religion  
Give me that old time religion  
And **it's** good enough for me.

We often sing this traditional gospel hymn as an invitation to join our “Devotions” community at the various senior residences where we minister. We use it much like ringing the church bells to let the folks know it is time to gather. This serves also as a way of evangelism as new residents “peek in” at times to see what is going on.

At one of the communities we visit, a resident rolls her wheelchair to just outside the door where we meet. I always ask her to join us and she always says “Oh, this isn't for me.” And yet she remains outside the door listening. Last Wednesday she rolled in long before the service started, waited and participated fully in the service. I will know next week if she found the service to be “for her.”

I often find “waiting outside the door” is a common attitude I encounter in my ministry. I would describe this attitude as cautiousness, weighing past faith experiences with where I am now. A searching for a spiritual place of refreshment.

For me I often find my spiritual place in the mountains. In his book “Backpacking With The Saints,” Belden C Lane shows the discipline of backpacking is a metaphor for a spiritual journey. Just as the wilderness offered revelations to the

early Desert Christians, backpacking hones crucial spiritual skills: paying attention, traveling light, practicing silence and exercising wonder.

Our readings this morning finds us in mountains, the place where God and man has connected for centuries. In our old testament reading we are on Mt. Sinai, elevation 7,500 feet. In our Gospel reading we are on the Mount of the Transfiguration, probably Mount Hermon, elevation 9,400 feet high, 11,000 feet above the level of the Jordan valley, so high it can be seen from the Dead Sea, at the other end of Palestine, more than 100 miles away.

On that mountain top two figures appeared to Jesus—Moses and Elijah. It is interesting to note that both Moses and Elijah had there most intimate experiences of God on a mountain top. It was on Mount Sinai that Moses received the law on the stone tablets. It was on Mount Horeb that Elijah found God, not in the wind and not in the earthquake but in the still small voice.

In Jewish thought Moses and Elijah stood for two things. Moses was the greatest of all law givers; he brought God's law to the people. Elijah was the greatest of all prophets, in him the voice of God spoke to all people with unique directness. These two men were the twin peaks of Israel's religious history and achievement. These two of greatest figures in Israel's history came to Jesus as he was setting out on his way to the cross. Their appearance was the signal for Jesus to go on and the very voice of God affirmed this. Along with God's voice was the luminous cloud which overshadowed them. It was the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration which enabled Jesus to walk the way of the Cross.

I had my own mountain top experience a few years ago as I was backpacking alone in Western Nepal. I had heard of a most spiritual place called Poon Hill, touted by the Buddhists and Hindu's in the Annapurna Sanctuary as the place where God meets mankind. How could I resist. After climbing 3,280 stone steps to the village of Ulleri, I went on the base camp of Poon Hill. Only in Nepal would a 5,500 foot mountain be called a hill. At 3 AM carrying only a water bottle and camera I started the climb. I arrived at 5:30 AM in a dense cloud cover and nearly stepped on a camper sleeping on the trail head. As the sun began to rise I could begin to see the reflection of the sun on the snow covered face of Mount Dhaulagiri. At 26,800 feet Dhaulagiri the highest mountain completely within the borders of Nepal and the seventh highest in the world. The word Dhaulagiri in Nepali means dazzling white. As the sun rose higher, the mountain lived up to its name. I at once thought of Peter, James and John with Jesus on the mountain, dazed by the dazzling appearance of Christ.

Through our Gospel verses this morning we are invited to accompany Jesus and his chosen disciples as they climb a mountain and there experience a wondrous moment—a turning point in the lives of the special companions who witnessed it.

And as we descend the mountain we are invited to respond to what we have experienced. It is an invitation to all of us to encounter God afresh, to see God's purpose in our lives perhaps in a different light as we live out our lives of discipleship today.

Last week, I celebrated 31 years of ordained diaconal ministry, and 10 years at St. Barnabas. I had an opportunity to reflect on all this as I wrote my annual "Deacons Report" to our Bishop. As a deacon I serve at the pleasure of the Bishop. He assigns me where he needs me to be. I have reached the mandatory retirement age for clergy in this diocese, but since I am not paid by the church and am not part of the Church Pension Fund he now reviews just my assignment annually and has reassigned me to St. Barnabas thru December 31, 2017.

In 2016 our Senior Ministry Team held 162 services at five senior communities, we serve 120-140 seniors each month and we will continue this pace through 2017. We are always seeking volunteers to assist us. If you have been "waiting outside the door" I am encouraging you to come and see what we do. Perhaps you will be inspired to see your discipleship in a new light. AMEN