

## Mark 9:2-10

*Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain where they see Jesus transfigured into a radiant white, and Moses and Elijah appearing and talking to Jesus. Then they hear God's voice of affirmation and then all is back to normal. Then Jesus instructs them not to tell anyone until after he is raised. Six days later, 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. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.*

*Epiphany began a few weeks ago with a story about a manifestation of Jesus' identity, but it was a much more covert incident: Jesus' baptism. In Mark's account of the baptism, it's not clear that anyone else sees the heavens slashed apart or the Holy Spirit diving into Jesus. The voice from heaven is Jesus' alone to hear. Nothing's public. Nothing's obvious. Similarly, most of the epiphanies we get to experience in life consist of glimpses, and sometimes we aren't even sure that they are really ours to see. The Transfiguration is a very different kind of a revealing, however. Jesus becomes a beacon, like a lighthouse planted in the middle of the desert. The heavenly voice addresses all the witnesses: Peter, James, and John. Jesus can and will be noticed. Epiphanies aren't always subtle. As a transfigured body clothed in shining garments, "Jesus insists upon being seen," says novelist Mary Gordon\*, which means the Transfiguration narrative "can be read as the celebration of the visible." In Mark's Gospel, a story so full of concealment and secrecy, the Transfiguration says that this Jesus has plans to be conspicuous. What he will disclose is not necessarily the secrets of the universe or the meaning of life; rather, it's himself. He may be hard to see clearly in all his intricate detail, what with the radiant glare and the transfigured body and all, but - sometimes, at least - he's surely there. \*Mary Gordon, *Reading Jesus: A Writer's Encounter with the Gospels* (New York: Pantheon, 2009), 42.*

## COCU 14B Transfiguration Sunday

Once again Epiphany closes with the Transfiguration of Jesus – the turning point, the final affirmation, before Jesus set his sights on Jerusalem and the coming confrontation and sacrifice. The challenge of this week is for us to learn to recognise God's glory - in Christ, but also in all people and all things. It is this capacity for glory that can make a massive change to how we live in the world, and then through us, make a change to the world itself. God's glory and God's communication are two ideas that may, at first glance, seem to be thoroughly theological and philosophical, with little real connection with the very real and pragmatic work of justice and peace in the world. However, it is the loss of our ability to perceive God's glory and to hear God's voice that has resulted in much of the injustice we encounter in the world. When we fail to see, as the Psalmist describes it, God's glory shining over and through the created world, it becomes easy to use the earth and its resources as commodities, forgetting their sacred nature. When we fail to recognise that Jesus is the image of God, revealing God's character and values, God's ways and God's purposes, it is easy to believe that God calls us to actions that contradict Christ's sacrificial life and teaching, and to ignore Christ's message of God's Reign as the basis for faith and life – the peaceful, compassionate, gracious and just Jubilee-style Reign. When we fail to recognise that God's glory is also revealed in all people – that Christ hides within them in a "distressing disguise" (as Mother Teresa put it), it becomes easy to abuse, dehumanise and exploit others. But, when we learn to recognise God's glory in Christ, we also learn to recognise God's glory in all things and in all people – and this changes everything. The moment our lives become flooded with glory we grow more celebratory, more compassionate, more careful of other people and of the earth, more just and more selfless. God's glory draws us inexorably into a life that seeks to reflect that glory – which is what Paul testifies to in his letter to the Corinthians. More, when we become aware of God's glory, and begin to reflect it, we also become those who, like Christ, call glory out of everyone we meet, inviting them to radiate as God has created them to – listening to hear the voice of God's affirmation even as Christ did, even in the darkest journeys of our lives. How different our world would be if we could develop an international culture of awareness of glory. It's certainly a dream worth striving for!

### **Psalm 50: 1-6**

*God radiates and God's voice speaks across all the earth calling God's people to God's self.*

The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

#### **Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.**

Our God comes and does not keep silence; before God is a devouring fire, and there is a mighty tempest all around God.

#### **God calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that God may judge God's people:**

"Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"  
The heavens declare God's righteousness,  
for God is the one who judges. Selah

### **Psalms for Praying: An invitation to wholeness by Nan C. Merrill**

*(for personal reflection)*

The Beloved, through the energy of Love, brought forth the world. From the rising to the setting sun, Love radiates out to all the nations, perfect in beauty. The Beloved has come and will not keep silence; for Divine Love is a consuming Fire, calling forth heaven and earth to the judgement of all peoples: 'Gather around, my loyal friends, all who by repentance and recompense follow the Inner Way'. The universe forever proclaims justice, and the Beloved's Indwelling Presence guides those who hear with their heart's ear.

### **2 Kings 2:1-12**

*Elisha prepares for his time to leave the earth (since he never dies in the Scriptural account) and Elisha refuses to be separated from him. Then, when Elijah asks Elisha what he wants before he leaves, Elisha asks for twice Elijah's spirit. Elijah tells him that he will receive it if he sees Elijah being taken away. Then, Elijah is caught up in a wind and carried away, but Elisha sees and grieves the departure of his master.*

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that

today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent." Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

### **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

*Jesus is the glorious image of God, and God has shone into our hearts the light of the knowledge of God's glory in Christ. It is this glorious Jesus that the Apostle preaches.*

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.