



# Sunday's Sermon

Pastor Lara Forbes



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Growing Together in Christ to Love and Serve All People

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## Transfiguration of Our Lord

February 14, 2021

Mark 9:2-9

Grace to you and peace from God, our Creator, and from our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

When I was on my sabbatical a few years ago, I was fortunate to be able to spend a couple of weeks on the island of Iona - off the western coast of Scotland. Iona is only 1 mile wide and 2 miles long, so it's not very big. But for me and a lot of other people, it's a place of wonder. In Celtic spirituality, it's known as a "thin place."

Within a couple of days of arriving, I walked to the north end of the island and that's where I ended up spending most of my time. The first time I was there, I took 85 pictures - digital is cheap, right? - because I wanted to capture the feeling that I felt there.

<sup>1</sup>When we think about events in our lives, most of us have memories that we'd like to preserve and maybe even relive over and over again. If we're lucky, there are photos or recordings that allow us to revisit them.

I invite you to share in the chat log one of your favorite memories. Maybe it's a person in your life, a trip you took, a book you read, an accomplishment you achieved...whatever.

For as wonderful as these memories are, there are probably just as many that we'd rather forget, and wish had never happened. Right? We'll get to some of those in a little bit.

When we remember all of these events, whether they're good or bad, we don't often think about what came before or after them. The day they happened probably started out like any other, and now the events are stored in our memories. But when we remember them, we can't stay in the moment forever - no matter how much we might want to. Eventually we have to move forward from it into what comes next.

When Peter, James, and John went up the mountain with Jesus on the day he was transfigured, it probably started out like any other day. But the events of what happened six days earlier were probably still fresh in their minds.

Jesus had been traveling from place to place, teaching and healing the people who gathered, and the disciples were with him. They fed a crowd of people. Jesus healed a man who'd been born blind. And then Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." And then Jesus told them not to tell anyone - and *then* he told them what was coming next: that he would be rejected, and suffer, and die, and rise after three days.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/living-word/february-14-transfiguration-b-mark-92-9>

And then Peter rebuked Jesus for saying all that, and then Jesus rebuked Peter, and went on to tell everyone there about the cost of following him. That it means taking up their cross and losing their life for the sake of the gospel in order to save it.

It's a lot for anyone to take in, even for us - more than 2000 years after the fact. So it was probably still very fresh in the minds of Peter, James, and John on the day Jesus was transfigured. And we know they were terrified at what they saw that day.

But I think it's also the moment Peter recognized that things had changed - even if he didn't understand had happened. And part of me can't help but wonder if the reason Peter offered to build the three dwellings was so they could stay in that moment forever - so they could avoid what Jesus had told them was coming next.

But then God spoke, and told the disciples to listen to Jesus. And God meant listen to *everything* Jesus told them. Yes, Jesus would suffer and die - but he would also rise again.

And as they came down the mountain that day, Jesus *did* begin the walk toward his death. But he also began the walk toward his promised resurrection. And it was important that the disciples remember that.

We're coming up on our second Lent in the pandemic. The one-year calendar mark is a few weeks away. Last year, we called it "the Lentiest Lent we have ever Lented." In the time since this all started, there has been a lot of fear, a lot of death, a lot of loss, a lot of grief, a lot of resentment over the things we've had to let go of. A lot of Lent, if you will, even as we moved forward through the other seasons.

With the availability of the vaccines, there is hope on the horizon, but still no guarantee of when we will be able to gather in-person for anything - and still no way of knowing *how* things will be when we're finally able to do that.

As you think about this last year, again in the chat log - I invite you to share one of the ways that the pandemic has disrupted your life. Maybe it's a loss you've experienced, or something you resent about this last year, a person or something you're grieving, or a fear you have about what may or may not come.

These things are all real - they're upsetting, and maybe even terrifying at times. And there's no shame in naming them - in fact, it's healthy to do it. As with any other memory, though, eventually we move forward from them. That doesn't mean we ignore them or pretend they don't exist, it means we don't get stuck in them.

Because as we listen to what Jesus says, he promises us that this isn't all there will be - he promises us resurrection. New life. And sometimes it's hard to trust that because we don't know what it fully means. But our assurance is that Jesus promises it.

How is that promise made real for you? What is it that assures you there's new life beyond the time we're in?

In the chat again, I invite you to share the ways Jesus' promise of resurrection has been made real for you this past year. Maybe it's a Bible verse. Or a hymn. Or part of a prayer. Maybe it's the vaccine. Maybe it's a person that prays for you, or a video call with your children or grandchildren. What is it that assures you there's new life beyond the time we're in?

On the day Jesus was transfigured, everything changed. And God reminded Peter and the others to listen to Jesus. To listen to his promise of resurrection, of new life. His promise is for us, too. That's what we hold onto when life goes sideways, when our fears and resentments get to be too much.

Jesus' promise of new life is what we capture and hold onto, because it's what gets us through and carries us forward. Thanks be to God. Amen.