

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for February 15, 2026
Exodus 24:12-18; Matthew 17:1-9 - "The Mountain Before Us"

May my words be gentle but your message strong. Amen.

What an emotional week this has been. It's not often that we have school shootings in Canada. Only 9 since 2000 compared to the US's 642. And yet here we are, mourning alongside our neighbours of Tumbler Ridge for the lives lost in and affected by a horrific event. While this is not something that happened in the Cowichan Valley, it feels like it happened in our backyard. When a tragic event like this happens, no matter where in the country it happens, feelings like grief, numbness, anger, and fear rise up inside of us. It's hard to know what to do with these feelings we're having. We want to hug our families close, especially our children, and maybe even hide away from the world. Maybe we want to yell at God, and that's ok. There's no one else to yell at, and I promise you, God can handle it. To have all this tumbling around in our hearts while hearing passages about the dazzling sights and sounds of Jesus' glorious divinity being revealed to his friends, and to us, is confounding, to say the least. But perhaps there is something in today's scripture that can give us some comfort, maybe even some hope.

The Last Sunday of Epiphany, also known as Transfiguration Sunday, serves as the climax of the Epiphany season. It marks the transition from the season of revelation – celebrating Jesus as the light of the world – to the reflective, penitential season of Lent. What we will see and hear takes us from one season to the next: from Epiphany, God made manifest in Jesus to Lent, Jesus' journey to the cross. Clouds, and fire, and glory! God is making a bright and bold statement, clarifying what Jesus means to us and who he is to us, but first there is this mountain before us, especially today. A mountain of emotions that is perhaps dimming the light, making it so that we can't see clearly what God is trying to show us.

In both the Exodus story and the Gospel story, the mountain is a place our main characters go off to pray and to meet God. In Exodus, Moses and his friend Joshua climb up Mount Sinai where they sit for 6 days. I am making the assumption they sat in prayer, not idly hanging about. On the 7th day, they meet the devouring fire of glory that is God. The dazzling sight before them began the steps of receiving the new covenant between God and the Israelites. Matthew also tells a dazzling story where Jesus and his friends Peter, James, and John, after 6 days of prayer (ok I'm making another assumption here), go off on their own up a mountain. It is here that Peter, James, and John see and hear more in this moment than they've seen and heard in the previous three years they've been with Jesus. This is a light and sound show like no other. Suddenly, the earthy Jesus with his dusty feet and tired eyes becomes the ethereal Jesus – robe glowing and face shining – a shimmering window into pure divinity. It is in this moment, on this mountaintop, that these men meet God in Jesus – and they fall to the ground in fear.

What would you do with a mountaintop experience? Resist? Fall down in fear? Would you even climb the mountain in the first place?

There are many points in our lives where we come across mountains that cast a shadow over us, building up our fears and uncertainties. This past week has certainly been one of those mountains. The world feels like a terrible place right now. The world is a challenging place right now, for many reasons, and we

often don't know how God's people are called to live within it or how we are called to lead people in these fearful and changing times. It's in these times where we can easily lose sight of God.

And yet, through it all sometimes in profoundly unexpected times, we are pulled up out of the difficulty and find ourselves right back up on the mountaintop where again we are privileged to see Jesus transfigured before us, "shining like the sun itself." We remember why we are here and why we do what we do. And somehow with that to carry us, we are able to join Jesus in going back down the mountain and joining God's beloved people in times and places where they also find themselves yearning for the kind of understanding and hope which too often we only receive when we have been on the mountaintop. And though the way of our journey ahead is not entirely clear; what is sure is that we will encounter God and that we do not travel alone. God invites us into ministry where we might be delving into the hard parts of life, and not necessarily through dazzling moments of transfiguration, but more likely in the daily trenches of faithfulness.

We need to take our transfiguration moments, our mountaintop moments, our God moments, with us, to remind us why we are on this journey, especially when things are difficult. Like Moses and Joshua...like Peter, James, and John, we may not always understand what we have witnessed or what we have experienced, but we know that we are loved and called by the God who shares these moments, these experiences with us. We may not always understand the mountain of emotions before us, but we can take to heart the knowledge that God feels every emotion with us – grief, anger, fear – all of it.

As we prepare to enter the spiritual wilderness of Lent and explore our brokenness, we already know how this story ends. The story of Jesus requires us to take the brilliance of the Transfiguration into our own journeys, so that God can give the ending meaning. The story of Jesus tells us that God was willing to suffer agony on the cross so that we would know we are not alone in our despair. The story of Jesus tells us that death is not the end and gives us comfort and hope that God is always with us, and we will always be with God.

Let us pray the prayer provided to us by the Provincial House of Bishops,

We stand together in hope. We stand together in faith. We stand together in love. We stand individually as ambassadors of hope, vessels of faith, and sentinels of love. We stand as a community committed to making no peace with gun violence. We pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inflame and enkindle our lives, our churches, our communities, our cities, and our nation with a passion for lasting peace; through Jesus Christ the Author of Peace.

Amen.