

**Sermon for the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Year A, 3.ii.2008**  
**Sunday after the death of Michelle Nicole Hoffmaster, age 19, on Monday, 28.i.08**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint James the Apostle / Bogue, Pennsylvania**  
**10:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist, ELW Setting 5**  
**Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9**

J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was and  
Who is to come. ✠ Amen.

**As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." (Matthew 17:9)**

I had looked forward to being with you again on this majestic and mysterious Sunday of the Transfiguration. In the shadow of the loss we have been called to endure, I would like to say to you, ‘There is no word from the LORD today.’ But, it is the calling of my office to declare, no matter what, that there indeed *is* a Word from the LORD, and that we must all attend to that Word, even if that means

speaking, like the Apostle Peter, even when I do not know what to say.

‘Hindsight comes with 20/20 vision,’ as the saying goes. In today’s Gospel, the Holy Spirit teaches us that this is really true. Our Lord brings His three key Disciples with Him on a climb up a high mountain. On that mountaintop, Peter, James and John are going to see and hear something extraordinary. There they see Jesus Himself as the source of light and inspiration of both the Law and the Prophets as he stands gleaming between Moses and Elijah, Rabbi Yeshua ben Yosef, whom they have followed from the valley of the Jordan to this high place, now revealed as not just the teacher of Scripture but as the very *center* of all divine Commandments, of all Prophecy, of all Scripture. The Disciples see and hear all this, and yet they do not

understand. They *cannot* understand it, except with the 20/20 hindsight of Easter.

The Disciples do not know what to say. Some people, like Peter, never let that fact stop them from speaking, and so Peter blurts out the equivalent of ‘Wow, Master! This is *far out!* How about if James, John and I build three shelters, like at Succoth or Pentecost, and we just settle down and make this moment last?’ What happens next is the Father’s answer to their offer, the sovereign, thunderous, *terrifying* voice that spoke from the heavens at Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan, now commanding them: “This is my Son, the Beloved, *listen to Him!*” And what is the next thing that Jesus tells them? He tells them not to be afraid, but also not to tell anyone about their vision “. . . until *after* the Son of Man has been raised from

the dead.” They will understand what they have seen and heard and Who Jesus is only *after* something happens which they cannot even imagine.

The Apostle Peter, in today’s Second Reading, speaks about that vision from the hindsight of Good Friday and Easter, from the perspective of all the Father, ‘the Majestic Glory,’ gave for our salvation and the victory over sin and death the Son won for us in the miracle of Easter. Peter knows what a dark world this is for all people, but the Apostle commends to us the story of the Transfiguration and the whole narrative of Scripture as an inspired and trustworthy ‘lamp’ to guide us:

**“You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (I Peter 16:19b)**

In the confusing midst of life, and particularly in the midst of some lives, lives fraught with suffering and daunting challenges that make our hearts faint to contemplate them, we may hear and hear, read and read, study and preach and proclaim the Biblical story of that bright dawn of a new day and that star of a morning for which we hope, a morning that may seem never to come, or at least not to have come on this day, in a life cut short. But that reading, that hearing, that proclamation and that light must continue, even when darkness seems to bring the final curtain down on hope, and particularly then.

The fact that, like Peter, James and John, we cannot find the right words of faith and hope in our daily solitude, or even when gathered together around the Majestic Glory revealed in Christ as the Church, does not mean that

darkness has overcome light, not even where our inability to think and hope and feel beyond the moment of anger or despair leads to tragic misjudgment with permanent consequences. This is most certainly true of the lives of those who have habitually centered themselves on God's gracious Word of forgiveness, new life and salvation in Jesus Christ. This is most particularly true of the life of one who consecrated herself to making peace in the Church. Such lives must not be understood in terms of one moment, but be instead commended to the end and goal of all life in Christ. Whether we are coming down from a mountaintop of insight and joy, or making our way up from a valley of sorrow, for every day in which the morning star of Christ has risen in our hearts, giving us hope in the new day, we give thanks, even if the rising of that light is not felt and seen in each heart, on every day. It is finally in *His* rising

that our own lives, all of them, have meaning and participate in the Majestic Glory that is eternal. Of this hope we may be assured, and give an account to others.

✠ Amen.



Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins us by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever.

✠ Amen.



S. D. G.!