

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL
MATTHEW 17:1-8
MARCH 1, 1987

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Do you ever feel the need to get away from it all? And perhaps feel a little guilty as if you should be able to cope with whatever life is dealing at the moment? Does a sense of duty make you feel guilty? Well, don't feel guilty. Getting away from it all is an important part of life. God put the sabbath into the fabric of life. One of the commandments is to take a day of rest every week. Even Jesus got away from it all. Jesus often left the crowds, left his disciples, left his responsibilities, left the demands of ministry, and went off into the wilderness or climbed a mountain. On one of his escapes an unbelievable thing happened. He was transfigured. There's the hope. Sometimes when you get away from it all, you might experience the presence of God in an unbelievable, wondrous manner.

Jesus was nearing a crisis in his ministry. He was no dummy. He could see signs of what was to come. He could see his enemies gathering momentum. He could feel the growing tension. Jesus began sharing his apprehension with his disciples. He told them he must go to Jerusalem, and there in Jerusalem, he would suffer and die. Six days after sharing this fear with the disciples, Jesus took Peter, James and John and went up a high mountain to get away from it all. And there it happened. God visited them in a glorious experience. Jesus was transfigured. The disciples were astonished! Jesus was surrounded by light. His face shone like the sun. His garments became white as light. He was visited by the spirits of Moses and Elijah. As the three of them talked together, a bright cloud appeared over the group and a voice clearly spoke, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Imagine the reaction of the disciples!

Perhaps some of you have had similar experiences, when God has visited you, touched you, filled you with warmth, light, and love. To have an experience like that is when you really get away from it all. Getting away from it all does not necessarily mean you have to be on a mountain top, or in the wilderness, or at the beach. You can get away from it all and be in the presence of God wherever you are. You can pray. You can meditate. You can be open to the Holy Spirit. It can even happen to you in church! The possibility is certainly here this morning, for we are going to share Holy Communion. Receiving the sacrament can be an occasion for you to commune with God.

Carl Jung wrote that the "pattern of God exists in every person, and this pattern has at its disposal the greatest of all a person's energies for transformation and for transfiguration of their natural being." The possibility is there for each of us to be transformed and even transfigured (when you enter the presence of God, and love and peace fill your being, radiating, shining in you and through you.) Do you believe such an experience might happen to you? Do you believe there is more to life than you have heretofore experienced? Harold Kushner in his recent book, When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough, writes,

There is an old Yiddish saying, "To a worm in horseradish, the whole world is horseradish." That is, if we have never known an alternative, then we assume that the way we are living, with all of its frustrations, is the only way to live. Welcome to believe that life has always involved

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traffic jams and air pollution. Psychotherapy can help us face up to the fact that the world we live in is horseradish. It can cure us of unrealistic expectations about the world. It can teach us to adjust to this world and be less frustrated by it. But psychotherapy cannot whisper to us of a world we have never seen or tasted.

I whisper to you this morning of a world only a few have tasted. I whisper to you this morning of glorious, transforming, transfiguring experiences waiting to happen to you. There are glimpses of such experience in poetry and music, and visions of them in the Bible. A minister told of a retreat he had with his church young people. As the youth talked, he realized something in their view of life was missing. He realized with a deep sorrow that not one of his church teenagers had a life vision. They weren't dreaming. They were saying nothing about those things which might be and might become; nothing about visions where art, music, books, buildings, and businesses begin. He confronted the youth with his insight. They were quiet. Then one boy shared that in his past, his hopes had been so shattered he did not want to risk.

I whisper to you this morning: life is more than what you have experienced so far. Life is more than what the five senses can verify. Life is more than birthing and dying. Life is more than the physical. We have been given a vision through the transfiguration of Jesus. There is transformation. There is transfiguration. There is the presence of the Spirit. May the experience of Holy Communion this morning be one of exposure to the world of the Spirit. As you come and take the broken bread and dip it in the cup, may the broken life of Jesus, who so loved you he died for you, touch you at a very deep level of your consciousness. May you not only experience the sensation of tasting, may you experience the presence of the risen Christ.

We believe Jesus Christ is uniquely present in the sacrament. In 1784 John Wesley selected and revised 26 of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England for his Methodist followers. Article 18 states, "Inasmuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ...And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith."

Sisters and brothers, come in faith to the sacrament this morning. Come with your confessions. Come with your hopes and dreams. Come with a vision, the hope of a life you have yet to taste. Lay your cares, worries, burdens, fears on Jesus who was sacrificed. Get away from it all; come into the presence of God.

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