

## TRANSFIGURATION A - COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LESSONS FOR FEBRUARY 15, 2026

### Exodus 24:12-18

- Encounters with God seem to happen on mountains! When we hear this passage from Exodus and recall other encounters that Moses (and Elijah) have with God on a mountain, then we understand what the initial readers of the Transfiguration would have known – especially when we hear later in the Gospel of a cloud that will overshadow everyone.
- What is meant by “the glory of the Lord”? Initially, the word *kabod* in Hebrew meant “weight,” but it came to be understood as honor, abundance, or splendor. As we hear the phrase especially in Exodus, God’s glory takes on a life of its own, here described as “a devouring fire.” When we encounter these descriptions, we are invited into a sense of awe and wonder at the abundance, splendor, and beauty of God. We are invited to be overwhelmed by God and to enter into that “glory.”
- By saying that the cloud was present for six days and then the call to Moses on the seventh, the passage recalls God’s creation in Genesis 1 and the holiness of the Sabbath rest on the seventh day. What would happen if we approached our coming to worship with the same sense of awe that Moses had on entering the cloud?
- What does it mean to you that God’s glory is like a “devouring fire”?
- When we hear that Moses is up on the mountain for forty days and forty nights (Scripture language for “a very long time”), then we understand how the people became so impatient that they made a golden calf in Exodus 32.

### Psalm 2

- Note the contrast between the greater part of the psalm – which emphasizes God’s supreme authority and wrath – and the concluding line – “Happy are all who take refuge in God!” How do you understand the difference?
- The psalm emphasizes that there is no power that is greater than God. So, when it seems that an issue or problem is too overwhelming, when it seems that we are threatened by forces too great, we remember that “God whose throne is in heaven is laughing.”
- We read this psalm on Transfiguration Sunday, because the New Testament writers and the early church began to read the psalms as speaking about Jesus. Think about the transfiguration as you read the following verses: “‘As for me, I have anointed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.’ Let me announce the decree of the Lord, who said to me, ‘You are my son; this day have I begotten you.’” Writers like Matthew may very well have used the psalms as their background to tell the accounts like the Transfiguration in order to emphasize the authority and king-ship of Jesus.

### 2 Peter 1:16-21

- Most biblical scholars think that 2 Peter is one of the last books written in the Bible, written not by Peter but by someone writing in his name to give the letter authority.
- The writer speaks of these past events as something to recall and pay attention to “as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” Past experiences of God’s presence can give us hope to keep moving forward, with the promise that a day will dawn.
- How do we understand the verse, “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation”? Is everything so clear?

## Matthew 17:1-9

- On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday – the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany – we always hear the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The Epiphany season gives us those moments in which we are given a revelation of who Jesus is, starting with the star with the Magi, shown and heard in the baptism of Jesus, and finally in the encounter on the mountain. These dramatic moments can cause us to reflect on how God is revealed in our stories. When have you had a dramatic experience of God's presence?
- When we think about those dramatic experiences of God's presence, we can understand why Jesus has the three keep silent. Sometimes we need time to process what has happened. The disciples needed to wait until after the resurrection to fully understand what the transfiguration meant.
- We place Transfiguration Sunday right before Lent, because the Transfiguration represents a turning point between “epiphanies” of who Jesus is and the journey to Jerusalem that will end in Jesus’ death. The account in Luke makes that explicit. Matthew and Mark place the account in a central position, and Jesus travels to Jerusalem after the experience.
- Another way to understand additional meaning in Matthew’s account is to compare what Matthew does with Mark and Luke (next page). Note the following differences:
  - In each passage, Peter refers to Jesus with a different word
    - In Matthew, Peter calls him “Lord.” Both in Matthew and Luke, Jesus is called “Lord” frequently (23 times in Matthew, 39 times in Luke). Both also call God “Lord” frequently (24 times in Matthew, 40 times in Luke). Mark only calls Jesus “Lord” once. Calling Jesus “Lord” is one way Matthew associates Jesus with God.
    - In Mark, Peter calls him “Rabbi.” Mark calls him “Rabbi” in two other places. This word is never used in Luke. Interestingly, though Matthew uses the word four times, Jesus is only called “Rabbi” twice – both times by Judas.
    - In Luke, Peter calls him “Master.” Luke calls Jesus “Master” seven times. The word is never used for Jesus in Matthew or Mark.
  - Matthew adds the words “with him I am well pleased” to God’s voice. This addition connects this declaration even more explicitly to the voice at Jesus’ baptism, so that we have a word-for-word repetition. The addition also connects the declaration to Isaiah 42:1 – “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” – which Matthew also quotes of Jesus in Matthew 12:18-21.
  - In each passage, the three are terrified at different times. What might these mean?
    - In Matthew, they are terrified at God’s voice from the cloud.
    - In Mark, they are terrified at the transfiguration itself.
    - In Luke, they are terrified at the cloud that overshadows them as they enter it.
  - Only in Matthew does Jesus touch them and says “Do not be afraid.”
    - Jesus touches people more often in Matthew (5 times) than in Mark (2) or Luke (1). Matthew emphasizes the importance of physical contact.
    - In Matthew, Jesus also says to not be afraid when he walks on the water and when he appears at the Resurrection.

## Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them,  
and his face shone like the sun,

and his clothes became  
dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them,

and from the cloud a voice said,

‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

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.’

### Mark 9:2-9

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.

### Luke 9:28-36

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’ —not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.