

**The Transfiguration of Our Lord  
February 14 & 15, 2026  
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**Exodus 24:12-18  
2 Peter 1:16-21  
Matthew 17:1-9**

Throughout the season of Epiphany which ends today, we've been meeting the cast of characters assembled on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. We first met Peter four weeks ago. Jesus' identity as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was being proclaimed and eventually this Good News reached Peter through his brother Andrew. The next weekend Peter and Andrew were back again; being called to discipleship along the Sea of Galilee, with James and John being called to discipleship right after them. For whatever reason, we hear very little of Andrew after this point. But, like today, Peter, James, and John are almost always present when big things happen, and this can sour our impression of them.

As you might recall, Peter, James, and John were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his death. Jesus was in great distress; so much so that one of the gospels says he was sweating blood. But Peter, James, and John were of no help. They fell asleep on their friend and their Lord more than once; such a gaffe that one of the gospels has them nearly falling asleep up on the Mount of Transfiguration too. And there's unfortunately more. Peter denies Jesus three times and James and John come to Jesus under what might as well be the cover of darkness to plead for special perks and privileges in the Kingdom of God. It's hard to forget

about all this when we interact with Peter, James, and John and today is no exception.

To demonstrate, today's reading from Matthew begins with words which tell us there's a prior context we need to remember. The words that prompt us to look backward before we also look forward are: *Six days later*. One way to fill in the blank these words create is to go back to what happens immediately before Peter, James, John, and Jesus scale today's mountain. What's happened is that Peter has been blessed with God's gift of faith in Jesus in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. By God's grace, he's able to identify Jesus as the Messiah or Christ who is the Son of the living God. But then Peter reverts to prior form.

Upon hearing that Jesus' Messianic mission and identity will require him to go to the cross for the world God loves, Peter objects. Pupil becomes Master for a moment and Jesus doesn't like it. He's so riled up that he calls Peter "Satan" and then Jesus proceeds to tell all who are listening that they cannot become his disciples unless they deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. When this prior context fills in the blank created by the words "six days later," Peter looks like a bit of a draft dodger today. Jesus has drafted him to join the battle for a better world and Peter wants to stay high above the fray on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter looks like he's trying to sidestep and avoid the costs and sacrifices of faith and discipleship. But maybe there's a more charitable way to interpret Peter's behavior today. If so, we'll need to find an alternative way to deal with the unmistakable prompt the words "six days later" provide today. And maybe we have this alternative in our reading from Exodus.

As you may have noticed earlier, there's a lot that joins our readings from Exodus and Matthew together. There's a mountain in both readings. There's a mountaintop encounter with God in both readings. There's a cloud which communicates God's presence in both readings. In our reading from Exodus, the stone tablets recording The Ten Commandments come down from the mountain. In our reading from Matthew, the command to listen to Jesus first and last comes down from the mountain. And here's the most provocative correspondence for the possibility I'm trying to identify for you. It is six days later, it is six days later, it is six days later when Moses climbs the mountain and enters the cloud to hang out with God. If this is the prior context our reading from Matthew bids us to remember with the words "six days later," Peter suddenly appears a lot less self-serving and conniving. Remembering what happened to Moses up on Mount Sinai, maybe Peter just wanted to extend the most intense and intimate experience of divine love he had ever known for as long as he could. Maybe Peter's frame of mind and heart was like that of English poet John Donne who once wrote about the morning sun being an unwelcome interruption to an intense and intimate experience of love; writing for the ages, "Busy old fool, unruly sun, why does thou thus, through windows and through curtains, call to us." If this was Peter up on the Mount of Transfiguration, it would be quite understandable.

Do he remember how Moses appeared after he spent forty days and forty nights with God on Mount Sinai? We're told that he came down lit up like a June bug. We're told that he came down beaming like a teenager in love for the very first time; glowing like a person who loves their special someone more today than they ever have before. Mistakenly, I believe,

Moses' makeover is often associated with being around the glory of God for forty days and forty nights. But here's the thing.

The Bible never tells us God is glory. Instead, the Bible tells us God is love. I'd suggest to you that glory is not a divine attribute, but a consequence of another divine attribute. I'd suggest to you that God's stubborn, steadfast, gracious, merciful love for us warts, wrinkles, and all is the glory of God. I'd suggest to you that every minor and major victory of God's stubborn, steadfast, gracious, merciful love is the glory of God. And to be as close to this love as Peter was up on the Mount of Transfiguration had to be intoxicating. One might never want to leave. One might want to snuggle up in a sleeping bag in a tent with the stubborn, steadfast, gracious, merciful love of God and hope the birds and the sun never came to bring in a new morning. In his desire to do just this today, Peter looks and feels quite human to me today. For here's something we humans know.

We know that love often comes and goes too quickly and too permanently down here under the sun. As another English poet once noted, to have loved and to have lost is a trademark feature of the human experience and this can lead us to hold onto love more tightly than we should; thinking that a tight grip will keep love around forever. It's what helicopter parents do. It's what a jealous spouse does. It's perhaps what Peter was trying to do when he tried to build an encampment up on the Mount of Transfiguration. But here's the thing we need to remember about God's love. Unlike every other love we'll ever be blessed to know, we can never lose God's love; absolutely nothing can separate us from God's love. God's love goes to the cross and the grave and comes back stronger than ever three days later. This is God's love. We can never lose it, and this

means we don't have to clutch after God's love as if it's going to leave us. Maybe this is why Scripture says perfect love casts out all fear.

Maybe perfect love casts out all fear because God's love, the only love that's perfect, casts out the fear that we're going to lose it. What a difference this can make. No longer worried about losing love, we can instead just fall in love more deeply; become one ever more profoundly with our Beloved; bleed into one another so thoroughly that there's no longer my way and your way, only our way. And when we fall in love with God to this extent, the tablets of stone which Moses brought down from Mount Sinia tell us what comes next. When we fall head over heels in love with God, we also fall head over heels in love with each other and the rest of God's critters; ready for the sake of God and neighbor to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus. In, by, and through the Holy Spirit, may we become these kinds of love-motivated disciples as often as it's possible for us. It will be then that perfect love shall prove that it casts out all fear. Amen!