

# Transfiguration/VIII Trinity 2022

## Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

### Father Craig Looney

2 Peter 1.13-18 St. Luke 9.28-36



“Go Tell it on the Mountain” is the African-American spiritual we have sometimes sung at Christmas Eve Mass. The song was compiled by John Wesley Work Jr., and dates back to at least 1865.

The original lyrics celebrate the birth of Jesus in the refrain: *Go tell it on the Mountain that Jesus Christ is born*. An alternate closing line makes the song less seasonal declaring “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

Mountains and hills are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible. They have had great significance to Jews and Christians. They are considered places where one can get “close to God”.

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. He saw the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before he died. The Prophet Elijah was scooped up in a fiery chariot from a mountain.

Jesus preached sermons from hills and mountains so people could hear him better. He taught us to pray...“Our Father”. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives the day before he died. He was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem.

Today mountains are where people often go to get spiritually refreshed. Monasteries, convents and retreat centers are located in mountain so we can get away from noise and traffic jams and “be still and know that he is God”.

The Transfiguration of Jesus took place on a mountain...traditionally thought to be Mount Tabor...about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. Matthew describes it as a “high mountain”. Jesus would have wanted to be in a place where he could be “close to God”.

Jesus took with him Peter, James and John. They were his three closest friends. The Gospels tell us Jesus’ appearance changed dramatically. His clothes became dazzling white, clouds and light surrounded him. This was a miracle...different from other miracles... because it was happening to Jesus.

Luke writes Moses and Elijah also appeared in “heavenly glory” with Jesus and talked with him about his death. Glory means light. Peter and the “Thunder Boys” had fallen asleep. When Peter wakes up he wants to hold on to the experience and set up camp. God then spoke, “This is my dear Son. Listen to him”.

The Gospel tells us the disciples were afraid...Jesus probably told them to calm down. The disciples also kept quiet about what they had seen. It wasn’t the right time to “go tell it on a mountain”.

The Transfiguration is the second time God identifies Jesus as his dear Son. The other was his Baptism. Jesus began his public ministry after some time alone in the desert (mountains). The Transfiguration is the beginning of the end of his public ministry.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration was intended to convince the disciples that Jesus was fulfilling everything the Law and the Prophets talked about. Moses and Elijah gave their stamp of approval to Jesus’ impending death when they talked with him about what was to happen.

In the Epistle, Peter wrote that he wants to “stir up our memories while he is still alive”. He may have had some idea his time was also short. He goes on to write that we need to pay attention to what we read in the Bible “because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning star shines in our hearts”.

We believe in the Transfiguration because of the eyewitness accounts of Peter, James and John. Peter writes, “We have not depended on made-up stories in making known to you the mighty coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With our own eyes we saw his greatness”.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is about the hope we have that we too will see him in all his glory in heaven. It also gives us a glimpse of our own transfigurations.

And we do not have to keep quiet about our hope in Jesus. Now is the right time for us to go tell the story about Jesus...in church...at home...in the street...at the airport...or wherever the Holy Spirit leads us...even on the mountain!

