

We're going to start this morning with a question. What is an event that changed your life? What is something that happened to you that from that point forward, you felt like a fundamentally different person? *(Pause)* Thank you for helping out with the answers, but even if you didn't say yours out loud, there's no way around it, we all have had those moments, those seminal, life-changing moments where we know that from this point forward, we're never going to be the same. They aren't always positive necessarily, sometimes going through the hard completely changes who we are. The death of a loved one, the loss of a relationship, a change in life circumstances. And then of course there are the positive ones—falling in love, having kids, a trip that completely changed your perspective on the world, sometimes even something as simple as reading a particular book at a particular time in your life. No matter what, we all have those moments which change us...ideally for the better...but sometimes just leave us fundamentally changed.

As someone who of course takes a great deal of her life perspectives from books, it should be no surprise that I have an example from a book I just finished. In *Instructions for Dancing*, the main character, Evie, is in the midst of a life changing experience—her parents' divorce—when she goes through an even more life changing experience. Now, remember this is

fiction, so we're suspending our sense of reality here for a second. She meets a woman who unbeknownst to Evie gives her a gift, though at the time she sees it as a curse. From that moment on, whenever she sees a couple kiss a vision plays out in her brain of the entirety of their relationship. She sees when they met, the seminal moments that changed them, and ultimately, the way their relationship ends. For Evie, this proves one thing to her, love is finite, and it always ends. No matter what. Now of course a zillion things happen between the beginning and the end of the book, but in the midst of it, several things happen. One, none of her friends, except one, know this is going on with her, but they can *sense* that something is different, something has changed, though they can't say what it is. Two, she realizes this wasn't a curse, but a gift, showing her that no matter the form it takes, no matter how it begins, transitions, or ends, love changes us, mostly for the better, if we let it. The key here though is that all of this happens internally for Evie. She doesn't explicitly say it to anyone, but she experiences that change of mindset within her own self, and people notice it when they notice how she reacts and how she behaves. She didn't have to announce to anyone, **HEY THIS THING CHANGED ME!** They know it when they see her.

I would imagine in most of our examples that we named earlier or that you're thinking of, our experience was the same. Things happen to us, and a lot of the time people don't know it, or don't know the full extent of it, but they can still *tell*. They see the differences, the changes, the alterations to our attitude, behaviors, and perspectives, and they just know. Something happened to this person, I don't know what, but it changed them...for better or for worse, they have been changed for good. I would wager a pretty good guess that the same would have gone for the rest of the disciples when they talked to Peter, James, and John after the Transfiguration. They don't know *what* happened, but they can tell...*something* happened.

So to get to this mountaintop moment, let's set the context a little bit because we're fast-forwarding quite a bit in Jesus' ministry. The disciples have been in this life with Jesus now for some time, they've seen a lot, heard a lot, and frankly done a lot of their own volition, so Jesus has hit a point where he knows that he needs to let them in on the end game. Six days prior to the Transfiguration, Jesus has sat the disciples down and told them the truth. They are headed towards Jerusalem and when they get there, he is going to be arrested, tried, and killed, ultimately to rise again and usher in a new age for the kingdom of God, and then he tells them that part of their call as disciples is to follow in those same footsteps, taking up their cross and

following in ways of servanthood. Jesus gives them six days to take this in, process it, and figure out a little bit what it means. It's not a lot of time, but Jesus knows he isn't working with a lot of time either.

After those six days, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him up the mountain, leaving the other nine to sit at the base and ponder just what exactly is going on up there and possibly why weren't they invited. And we know what happens when the four of them arrive. Jesus' entire countenance is changed into dazzling white, Moses and Elijah appear, confirming that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of all of the law and the prophets, and God's voice booms from the heavens, telling the disciples that Jesus is God's Son, he is beloved, God is pleased with him, and they need to listen to him.

There are moments of fear, and dear Peter wondering if carpentry skills are what are needed in this situation, but ultimately, it comes down to this. They are to listen to Jesus, the Son of God. Which means...everything he said about Jerusalem, his path and their path, it's going to come to pass, and they need to reconcile that in their brains. They need to process the fact that the Son of God, the Messiah, their Lord will die and rise again, and somehow that is going to have an impact on their calling in life.

Now...if things weren't weird enough, here's where they get extremely weird. They're getting ready to go back down the mountain, back

to the other nine and regular life, and Jesus tells the three of them that they can't tell anyone what happened on the mountain, not until after his resurrection. For now, this just stays between them. Now, the reality is, this was one of Jesus' signature moves, and there are a lot of possible reasons for it, but I want us to think about what life was like for the three of them at the base of that mountain. They just experienced something life-changing, their faith confirmed, the voice of God in their ears, and they have to keep silent. The other nine are going to be thronging them with questions, you know that Andrew is going to pull his brother aside and say, "You can at least tell me! I'm your brother!" And all they can do is keep silent. But...that doesn't mean they can't *show* what happened, and no I don't mean like playing charades so they aren't really "telling" but still telling. I mean...what did their lives look like, their actions look like, their words sound like in the aftermath of the Transfiguration? I would bet a pretty solid amount that the other disciples, while not *knowing* what happened, knew what happened because the change was written into everything James, John, and Peter did from that moment forward. It begs the questions, was it just Jesus who was transfigured up on the mountain or the three of them as well?

We spend a lot of time wondering and lamenting that more people don't come to church or that people tend to think faith, God, life together is a

waste of time, at the very least unimportant, and sometimes to the utmost extreme, harmful, judgmental, and hypocritical. We lament these things, but then we don't super want to engage in changing the narrative, because we also tend to think that our faith is our own, something we hold quietly to ourselves, that doesn't necessarily have any bearing on our day to day lives. Yet, what our gospel tells us today is that our faith life is meant to be one of those life-changing moments, not necessarily one where we have to tell people ad nauseum about it, but one that so fundamentally changes us that people can *tell* we are different. Think of the love, assurance, and calm faith the three disciples probably came down the mountain with—even without talking about it, that was going to have an impact on everyone around them. The same holds for us. I mean I know it's cliché, but there is something to be said for the age old adage, they will know we are Christians by our love.

When the world around us is more interested in proclaiming a Christianity that is defined by hatred, prejudice, discrimination, and a list of rules to follow, then it is up to us to be people of grace, acceptance, unabashed welcome, and unmitigated grace. As we walk through this process of becoming Reconciling in Christ, the question probably rings, well why? People should just know we're welcoming. They don't know unless we show them, unless we live it, unless we put our faith out in the open for

people to experience and see that it is different from what they have come to expect, what the world has told them to expect from a place that declares itself to be Christian. We don't have to put out some massive treatise on what our faith means, but we do have to put our hands, hearts, and feet into action with what our faith calls us to be. *That* will make more of a difference than anything we say about what we believe.

Think about it, if Peter, James, and John came down and said, well we know he's the Messiah now, this is what we heard, it might not have sunk in because it's just words. But if they lived, moved, breathed with a deeper sense of assurance that the path they're following is true, that Jesus is their Savior, that would manifest itself in every step they took and that would make more of a difference to their fellow disciples than any story they could have told them. The Transfiguration calls us to be transfigured ourselves, not so that we can come down the mountain and boast about it, but so that we can go out and live like we know our faith makes a difference, not just to us but in the lives of our siblings. The only way people are going to know that we are people of love and grace is if we show them that we are. The only way all will know they are welcome here is if we shown them that we are. The only way anyone will know that our faith has been life-changing and transfigured us is if we show them. So let's show them. **AMEN!!!**