

Let us pray... Creator God, gather your Spirit in this place. Open our hearts to your transforming love and open our eyes to see. Amen.

My husband, Keenan had never seen mountains before visiting me out west. He was in awe and also a little scared on his first encounter, which was driving up Mount Saint Helens. The winding roads, the elevation, and lack of proper guard rails in some spots are nerve racking to say the least.

But Mount Saint Helens was nothing compared to what we would experience in Glacier National Park.

Glacier is known for many beautiful and breathtaking things, and one of those things is the going to the sun road.

If you have never been, this is a tight two-lane road, winding and steep... With places that invite those unpleasant thoughts of falling off the edge.

To give you a better grasp of this road... Think about driving up Rib Mountain, but instead of being tucked inside the hill, one side is edging a complete drop off...

Not to mention, the elevation gain for Rib Mountain is 482 feet... Whereas the elevation gain for the going to the sun road to Logan Pass is about three thousand five hundred feet...

And yet, somehow, I was able to convince Keenan that we needed to drive this breathtaking road.

But as I started driving, I quickly realized we were in big trouble... I have never seen him more scared in my life...

And I must confess, I wasn't the most supportive partner... Between his outbursts of pleading me stop! And turn around! To his dramatized breathing... I laughed way more than I should have...

And this continued for the entire 32-mile stretch, until we made it to Logan Pass...

And just as I was pulling my car into a parking spot, Kennan flung open his door, jumped out of the car, and planted his legs hard on the firm ground.

After a while, he was able to calm his nerves, so we ventured out on a hike, enjoying the gorgeous landscape, the wildlife, and nice hiking trails.

And then... It was time for the inevitable... It was time for us to go back down...

And to my surprise, Keenan was not afraid at all... In fact, he was braver than I was... He was so brave, that he opened my sun roof, stood up in it, with arms wide open embracing the vastness all around him.

Now it was my turn to be terrified!

But somehow, my awe overcame my worry... It was like our time on the mountain had transformed him...

Which is similar to what happened in our gospel today...

There is no explanation for what happened or how it happened... Simply that it did...

An experience that transformed the disciples... First, they were terrified... And then they were transformed.

An experience that was so intense, it opened their eyes to see a truth that had been with them all along.

Because Jesus was with them all along... They just didn't see who he really was...

They thought Jesus was a king, come to fill the role of the prophets of old, to free God's chosen people, and to overthrow the Roman Empire.

They did not know, until this very moment, that Jesus was God's son.

And I don't think it is a coincidence that what happened to Keenan and what happened in our gospel today both took place on a mountain.

As N.T. Wright explains, "Western culture is increasingly realizing, what most other cultures have never forgotten, that the world we live in has many layers, many dimensions, and that sometimes these dimensions, normally hidden, may appear. Then, like a child with a microscope, we can look for a moment into a different reality, grasp with wonder, and ever afterwards see everything differently."¹

These moments are part of the mystery of God and take place in our very bodies.

When our eyes are opened to truths that were with us all along.

And when this happens, we can be at a loss for words... Fumbling around trying to figure out what to say... Like Peter in our gospel...

Because words help us process, and they give meaning to our situations...

However, for many of us, words have become our default, we are quick to speak and slow to listen. We choose words instead of being present...

Words to fix a situation... To bring comfort... To bring strength, motivation, healing, love, and so much more...

But it is not our words that do the work in these transforming moments... It is God who does the work.

God forms and reforms us through transforming love. Through revealing truths, when it is our time to see...

Why it happens this way, is not for us to understand... It is for God to know and for us to trust...

Which is hard... Especially when we want to know and understand the many harsh truths that make up our reality.

But even these harsh truths and our fears, cannot keep us from God...

¹ N.T. Wright. Mark For Everyone. 2001, 2004 Nicholas Thomas Wright. First published in 2001 in Great Britain by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 36 Causton Street London SW1P 4ST. Page 115

Just like Peter, despite his terror... Or despite him trying to make sense of a beyond comprehensible situation, did NOT keep him from Jesus...

Jesus was right there with him the whole time...

And Jesus continued to be with him the whole time... Both on the journey up and down the mountain.

Again, the mountain is not a coincidence here...

As there is ancient wisdom in the earth, and there is ancient wisdom in our bodies... Placed there by God to be revealed to us by God.

It doesn't need to make sense... It doesn't need to be explained... It is part of the mystery of God.

And to fully live into these moments, you need to surrender yourself to God. Taking time to notice what God is doing in you... And allowing God's radiant and transforming love to shine on you.

And this can be done in any moment... Because God's love is always shining on you... From your deepest valleys, to your highest mountain peaks, journeying with you everywhere in between.

It may not make the climb any easier, but you don't climb alone...

And climbing strengthen muscles, which is how God forms and reforms you. So, you can weather the elements and endure the burn... Until the clouds break and you can soak in the wondrous landscape around you, with arms wide open, embracing the vastness of God's love... Amen.