

## Last Epiphany Year A

Today I want to take you to a good place, a place filled with the peace that passes all understanding. A place filled with the joy of the Lord.

In today's gospel lesson we read about how Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain and was transfigured before their eyes. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white.

Some might read this story and think that it is a kind of fantasy scene or dream, but I want you to know that mountain experiences are real and that God provides them for a purpose.

Now let me tell you about another one. Almost two months ago we celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and on that Sunday I read you the last paragraph of the last speech he ever gave, delivered on the night before he was killed. Listen and you tell me whether mountaintop experiences are real.

"Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promised Land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

"I have been to the mountaintop. I have seen the Promised Land. And I'm happy tonight. And I'm not worried about anything."

And, of course, we know what happened the next day. But forget that now, and just stand on the mountaintop with Dr. King. He was happy, he was not worried, he just wanted to do God's will.

Now back to Jesus. Do you know what happened after his mountaintop experience? This is the last event before he set out on the road to Jerusalem, where he would be killed. But forget that now, forget you know the rest of the story.

Just stand on that mountaintop with Jesus Christ. See the brightness of his array. Hear the rumbling voice that said, "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Now we could talk about lots of things. We could talk about what happened after Jesus came down from that mountain. We talk about what happened to Dr. King after he came down from his mountain. But I don't think that's what God wants us to do today.

I think God wants us to recognize our own mountaintops, and learn to see them as times that God uses to prepare us for whatever lies ahead.

I'll tell you about 3 mountaintop experiences in my own life.

First, I remember being about 4 years old and sitting in church with my parents and siblings. I don't know what was going on around me, all I remember is that suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, a light clicked on in my head and I realized that I am Kevin, a person independent from my parents or siblings. For

the first time I felt the force of my own identity pulsating through my views, and that feeling, that awareness has stayed with me to this day.

Second, maybe 7 years ago, while I was living in Ireland, I led a retreat group to a place called Glendalough which included the ruins of the 6<sup>th</sup> century monastery of St. Kevin, and which was set within a breathtaking valley that glaciers created long ago.

One day we hiked all the way to the top of the valley and when we came out at the top and could suddenly see the entire valley laid out below, a light clicked on in my head and I felt like I could see the world from God's perspective, and what was different was that when I was down below I saw a lake and a hill and buildings, but from God's perspective I could see the whole and could see how inter-connected everything is, and that sense has stayed with me to this day.

Third, almost 4 years ago my pregnant wife was up earlier than usual one morning. When I asked her why she told me that her water broke.

Then just over 2 years ago, while sitting at breakfast, my pregnant wife told me she felt a contraction. My third and greatest mountaintop experience was watching our daughters; Elsa Mary and Margaret Rose Moroney enter the world. To see those beautiful newborns I could feel my ancestors within me cry out for joy as God gave these new lives through Rose and me. I was awestruck by the miracle of life, and I still am every time I see my little girls.

Ok now it's your turn. It would be easy to talk about all the hard things in our lives; but in your own mind I want you to name the mountaintop experiences that God has given you. Times when you've caught a glimpse of the wonder of life and the glory of God. Times when you've felt love from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. They may be rare, but these times are important because they prepare us for whatever comes after. But for now, just remember those mountaintops, try them back on again. Remind yourself what you learned from them. Give thanks to God for them.

In a moment, life will come knocking again. But just for this moment, let us stand on our mountaintops and behold the glory of God. Amen