

## “Punching Holes in the Darkness”

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[Exodus 34:29-35](#)

[Luke 9:28-43](#)

When you think about the life of Jesus, what kind of stories come to mind? Forget for a moment that we just read the story of the Transfiguration, and think about the life of Jesus as a whole. When recounting the life of Jesus, I think we most often bring to mind his birth in a humble setting and his ghastly death on a cross. We think of his hanging around with fishermen and tax collectors, his travelling around and encountering the outcast and the lowly. He was a King who did not associate with royalty, but instead washed the feet of his disciples. Sure, there were some pretty impressive miracles, but most of Jesus' moments seem to have been spent in the mundane, everyday lives of the people he loved.

But not in today's text. Today, we get to follow Jesus onto a mountaintop, where his face shines like the sun and his clothes become dazzling white. Not only that, Jesus is suddenly surrounded by Moses and Elijah. Moses, who represents the Law, and Elijah, who represents the Prophets. Here, Jesus is on a mountaintop, glowing white, and visiting with the most prominent names in Jewish religious thought. What a moment! Feeding 5000 people fades in comparison. Healing people fades in comparison. This really is a biggie.

Have you ever experienced such a moment? OK, perhaps you haven't been on a mountaintop with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, but have you seen someone's face glow? We talk about expectant mothers having a face which glows, don't we? I've seen such a glow on the face of dads and moms, alike. Have you seen the glow on the face of someone newly in love? That look on the

face of a teenager, just home from the first date with their long-time crush? Or that look on the face of a new grandmother holding that precious grandchild for the first time? Or that look on the face of a father, walking his daughter down the aisle? Or maybe it's the look on the face of a child opening a birthday card and finding a 10 dollar bill. Perhaps it's the look on the face of a golfer, hitting his first hole-in-one, or on the face of a high school senior, reading the acceptance letter to her college of choice. There are countless experiences in life during which our faces seem to glow. We don't even have to tell people that something exciting is happening in our lives – they can see it all over our faces.

Probably those experiences of glowing faces aren't the same as what happened with Jesus on the mountain. But how else are we to understand it? Maybe that's something of the incarnation. God became incarnate in Jesus so that we would have a human face to help us understand God, even a little bit. Maybe those experiences we have of glowing faces are the closest we can come to grasping experiences that are normally far beyond our understanding.

For just a moment, Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the mountain and the disciples who were there *got it*. Jesus could have tried to explain things to the disciples over and over – and He did – but just as that glow on people's faces tells us more than they can express, this experience on the mountain spoke more than mere words could. The disciples understood better who Jesus was because they saw this glow, and then eventually they passed down this story to help *us* understand.

It was an amazing experience on the mountaintop, and who can blame Peter for not wanting to come down? Of course Peter wanted to hold on to this miraculous moment, when everything seemed clearer than it ever had. It was an important moment, and Peter was right

when he said “Master, it is good for us to be here,” but he was wrong when he wanted to *stay* there.

Moses climbed up another mountain to spend time with God. When he came down from the mountain, his face shone from his encounter with God. It was clear to the Israelites that he had been transformed by his time with God. Unfortunately, the disciples did not have the same experience upon their return from the mountain. Though they were there in the presence of Jesus and this amazing moment of transfiguration, the effect did not last very long. Their faces did not reflect the glow of Jesus. They were not able to help a young child who needed their help. Jesus healed the boy, but was pretty upset with his disciples that they could not do so. This is the Jesus who says to us “the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.” Jesus expects great things of us. Jesus has great confidence in us.

Recently canonized Saint Oscar Romero once said “When we leave [worship], we ought to go out the way Moses descended Mt Sinai: with his face shining, with his heart brave and strong to face the world’s difficulties.” In other words, we should be transformed by worship. We should bear the light of Christ into the world that needs that light.

Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of classic books like *Treasure Island*, spent his childhood in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the 19th century. As a boy, Robert was intrigued by the work of the old lamplighters who went about with a ladder and a torch, setting the street lights ablaze for the night.

One evening, as young Robert stood watching with fascination, his parents asked him, “Robert, what in the world are you looking at out there?” With great excitement he exclaimed, “Look at that man! He’s punching holes in the darkness!”

That is our call – to bear the light of Christ, so that he may work through each of us to punch holes in the darkness.

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the light of the world. *The Message* paraphrase puts it like this: “You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

So we are to allow ourselves to be transformed by the light of Christ – in moments on the mountaintop, in moments in the valley, in moments wherever we find ourselves encountering the Holy. When we are transformed by the light of Christ, we can punch holes in the darkness. We can reach out to the outcast and the lonely, and reflect the light of Christ. When we commit ourselves to anti-racism work and anti-homophobia work and anti-sexism work and anti-xenophobia work, we are punching holes in the darkness. When we declare *and truly mean it* that all are welcome here, we are punching holes in the darkness. When we affirm the holiness in the midst of the ordinary, we are punching holes in the darkness. When we greet others with joy, when we stop to be with someone who is struggling, when we act in Christ-like ways in our homes and schools and places of work, we are punching holes in the darkness.

Remember that even a little bit of light punches holes in the darkness. Many tour guides in underground caves often tell the people on the tour that they are going to turn off all of the lights. It is then that one can see true, total darkness. The tour guide then lights a match or turns on a very small flashlight, and suddenly the cave is illuminated. A tiny light in total darkness

overcomes the darkness. That is our role – to be a light in the darkness. As John 1 tells us, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” The darkness cannot finally overcome the light. In moments of despair, in moments of exhaustion, in moments of exasperation, we can remember that the darkness cannot overcome the light.

So how will we punch holes in the darkness? How will we be agents of transformation in our community? That is this mandate of this – and every – church: to be transformed by God and then to transform the world around us. Let us spend time with God so that our faces glow in reflection of God’s love. But just as importantly, let us then reflect that glow so that those around may share an experience of God’s love. Let us go out and punch holes in the darkness. Amen