

Today I want to talk about the Transcendent glory of God. Nothing less. Because today's gospel is the story of the Transfiguration.

Let's start with CS Lewis and the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Mr. Beaver is talking with Susan, explaining who Aslan is. Aslan is a Lion – the Lion, the Great Lion. “Is he safe?” asks Susan. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver, “Who said anything about safe. ‘Course he isn't safe. But he is good. He's the King, I tell you.”

We get so casual about God, dissecting God's actions and character, discussing biblical meaning and theology, as if we are not even talking about God, as if we are not dealing with transcendent glory.

Peter, James, and John could probably relate to what Mr. Beaver was talking about after being on the mountain with Jesus. The encounter there – their teacher metamorphized (is that a

word?) before their eyes into a being of light, in a vision with Moses the receiver of the law, and Elijah the great prophet. It left them scrambling to make sense out of it. And then comes the voice from heaven saying “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!” With this voice from heaven, the disciples are prostrate on the ground, only lifting their heads when Jesus touches them.

I heard this week that there was a gathering of Christians whose agenda was to discuss and compare God’s entrance requirements into heaven with current immigration policies.

I think we need a little transcendent God here. When was the last time we ourselves ventured up onto a mountain to have an encounter with God?

In the Silver Chair, a later book in the Narnia series, C.S. Lewis has Aslan giving instructions

on a mountaintop to two children: Jill and Eustace, before they are sent on an adventure, a quest, a mission. He gives them four specific signs to remember and use during their quest. Then Aslan says this “Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly. I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear. As you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs that you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look when you meet them there.”

There is the mountain and then there is coming off the mountain. The air is different. The signs look different. Is Aslan safe? No, but he is good and he is King. I tell you.

We live in a world where our air is so thickened almost to sludge. Not a wisp of clear mountain perception can seem to get through. The air has

been thickened over the years by endless theological debate and religious wars, but infighting among Christians, by atrocities perpetrated in the name of God, by the religion of rationalism and self-determination, by societal pressures to secular habits and materialistic obsession, by oppression, violence, and despair.

No wonder we have forgotten the signs, have even forgotten the mountain, have forgotten the smell of the fresh mountain air and have even forgotten that we are on a quest, and adventure, a mission.

Make no mistake: we are on a mission. God has shown us signs. We have seen the transcendent God. Each one of us have had moments of clarity and mountain instruction. It is the awesome nature of our God to either bring us to the mountain or compel us to climb a

mountain and there see what is possible, hear the clear voice of instruction in our ears.

Sometimes the mountain looks more like deepest moments of suffering. Sometimes in the deepest moments of suffering, we are broken free from the constraints of the unbreathable air around us and can see the grace and glory of God. It can be at a hospital bed where the worst news possible is received and there is tender loving care, one to another. Or when a relationship fails and we are intractably broken apart but there is not a bit of judgement from those around us. Or when we live in a chaotic world, about to crack under the weight of its darkness, and someone displays a selfless act of charity. Make no mistake. These are transcendent moment of God, moments when the air gets breathable and the instructions get clear.

There is another way to get clear air and instruction: we can take ourselves up to the top of a mountain. There seem to be many instances in the scripture where God calls someone to the top of a mountain and there delivers the law, a word, a teaching, instruction. If you have ever read stories about climbing Mount Everest, you know that it takes incredible intention, planning, co-ordination, knowledgeable native guides, and intense physical training to arrive at the peak where the air is thin and clear and the view is spectacular and transcendent.

Make no mistake. It is about to be Lent. Forty days. What shall we do with them? Is it possible that we are being given and invitation? A beckoning? Is it possible that the God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow is asking us to put on our backpacks and ascend? Is it possible that the One who was transfigured among his beloved disciples is inviting us up the

mountain for a glimpse of glory? For instructions and signs to carry with us on our life quest, adventure, and mission? Many of us have been given a glimpse of God's glory in the midst of suffering. Perhaps we are being shown that we can willingly embark on a mountain climbing mission of our own.

Is God safe? Thank-you, no. God is God. Trancendent. Transfigured Glory. Let's take a moment to leave the sludge of the world behind, breathe the clear air of the mountain and remember our instructions once again.

In God's name. Amen.