

March 2 2014

**Scripture Lessons ~ Exodus 24:12-18**

*Matthew 17:1-9*

**Sermon**      *Transfigured*

If any of this sounds familiar to you, I know there are many of you who are avid readers, not just avid readers but avid readers of spy novels and mystery thrillers. Raise your hand if that is your category. Some people are shy and they don't want to admit. And once I think I am right in saying it that when you begin reading one of these books it seems that your nose is stuck in it until that book is finished. Some of you who love mysteries enjoy reading novels by Robert Ludlow. I am sure that rings a bell. The man who wrote, of course, the book titled "Bourne Identity". A novel which was made into quite a few years ago into a TV mini-series, starring Richard Chamberlain but just a few years ago into a movie starring Matt Damon, of course that is caused the whole domino effect of the various novels that followed after that. Most Ludlow novels are, I think is at least 8 to 6 inches thick. They are big things. And you may feel them moving sort of slowly as you sort of wade through them, slowly that is until you reach the climax. You reached the turning point in the story and then things begin to change around your house. Work kind of stops. Some people even pull the shades for the entire morning. And you are sort of on the edge of your seat to see what is going to happen with no attention paid to the spouse if you have one; children if you have them, animals or house work of anything kind until you finally reach that final paragraph with a smile and a kind of sigh of relief knowing exactly how this is all going to come together.

As I thought about these long novels, I realize how much like novels our lives can be as well because whether we look like in our lives, mountain top or mole hills to the people around us. Our lives are filled with experiences which we could easily classify as climaxes, as turning points, as periods in our lives which changes very course of everything else that follow in our lives for the better or for the worse depending upon how we handle each situation and what decision about the future results in the attitude we that we have for the action that is happening. Retirement can be like that; having children; moving; changing jobs; getting married; going off to college; buying or selling property; handling a serious illness in the midst of your family; deciding to stop drinking or to stop smoking, all of these things and many others can be considered as turning points in life; times when we have to make decisions which will alter the very course of our lives for many, many years to come.

Today I am wearing a cross around my neck that represents for me another kind of turning point in our lives. At the point which we decide whether or not we are going to follow Jesus. A turning point that I might add which can be the most single most important turning point that we will ever encounter in life. This cross was given by me by pastor and you see by the tarnish on it, about forty years ago when I was baptized and when I was confirmed. And at the outset it sounds sort of cut and dried but that day only happened after years and years of God's loving guidance made known to me through Sunday School teachers and parents and friends and relatives, pastors and worship services and prayers and worship services and every day experiences. And the process I like to tell you is not even finished yet to this day by any means .There was a point nearly forty years ago when I had to ask myself and we all do at some time during the course of our lives. What is God's will for my life? What does God want for me to do with the rest of life from this point forward? And based on that answer I had to make a decision a decision that I have never been sorry I had made though it hasn't always been easy to stick with that decision through the course of the years.

Although Jesus was as close to God as any human being could ever hope to be, Jesus' human nature did not permit him to be go through his life without a sense of doubt often even sense of agony over the question of God's will for his life either. Jesus had to wrestle. Jesus had to search. Jesus had to doubt as well. As a result Jesus, too, had turning points; Jesus had crisis points during the course of his life. Times when he had to seek out God have will for his life and then make a decision based on God's confirmation and God's guidance. His baptism for example, and his vigil at Gethsemane or at the point when he felt completely forsaken by God on the cross; All of these events were turning points in Jesus' life and ministry. As much as I believe was his transfiguration which we read and Jim shared with us from Matthew's Gospel lesson for this morning This too, was a time when I think that Jesus questioned God's will for his life but it was also a time when Jesus' disciples were questioning and wondering whether this man was really the one that he ought to be following in their lives. In the story previous to this one in Matthew's Gospel Peter had just made that great declaration that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But after Jesus had described the type sacrifice and suffering following the crisis might entail, the disciples no doubt were left wondering whether or not they had hitched their wagons to a falling star. And Jesus himself, I think, may even had doubted in his heart of heart whether he worthy of God's plan for him at this point as well. So comfort and guidance were needed. Important decisions had to be made and as was discussed when Jesus took his closest disciples, Peter, James and John and went to a lonely place so he could pray and meditate and listen for God's word. And when Matthew describes the Transfiguration as is reminiscence in the way in which Moses too, encountered

God as Jim shared with us from Exodus Chapter 24. Jesus went up on the mountain. Moses also climbed Mount Sinai. Jesus and the disciples were overshadowed by God's presence in that cloud and Moses also encountered God in a cloud as well. Matthew says Jesus was transfigured before them and his face shown like the sun and his garments became white as light. While Moses very skin and face also shown as a result as of his contact with God. And finally Jesus received confirmation from God when God said those words that I shared with the boys and girls earlier. "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen, listen to him" And Moses, too received the word of God in the two new tablets of law that he was given on top of the mountain. For significance of this special theophany, I'll throw out that ten dollar theological word or encounter with God cannot be, I think, can be down played for Jesus and his disciples. And in his meeting, as Jim shared with us and rightly so with Moses and Elijah, the two great figures from the past and in special words from God; Jesus and his disciples received clear evidence that first of all that Jesus was the Messiah sent to fulfill the law, represented in Moses and prophecy represented by the prophet Elijah.

Secondly the way of the cross as difficult and painful as that way might be that was the only true way for Jesus at that point in his life. So the evidence is clear, God has spoken and there could be no doubt.

You know today as I get a chance to speak with many of you and encounter the many things that you encounter. Many of us are at similar points, turning points in our lives as well. Wondering sometime desperately what God would have us do and what direction that God would have us take during the rest of our lives. I can't promise you this kind of mountain top experience that the disciples and Jesus had at the Transfiguration, I can remind you the season of Lent which begins this week as Ash Wednesday. I truly believe can provide a special a time in which each of us in a way ascend that mountain of God and can take our doubts and our fears before our creator on that mountain. You know God cannot help our decision making if we do not give ourselves a chance to listen to God's counsel that why I want to encourage each of us to use this Lenten season as a sort of beginning of a heighten period awareness of God's activity in our present lives. I know that prayer, I know that worship, I know that Bible study and I know quiet meditation are significant ways in determining God's will for our lives and our place that God has for us in the world. So I encourage you don't let this Lent season of the year pass slip through your fingers without tasting; without tasting what God has to offer you on God's Holy Mountain. So during this holy season I invite you to be with God on the journey faith.

Together we say AMEN