

**A Sermon for the Last Sunday after Epiphany
February 15, 2026**



Come to New Life!

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Click Here for today's Readings:
[Last Sunday after the Epiphany – The Episcopal Church](#)

Readings

- Exodus 24:12-18
 - Psalm 99
- 2 Peter 1:16-21
- Matthew 17:1-9

I. Opening Narrative

We began this morning with our Collect, a prayer the Church has carried for centuries, a prayer that sets our feet on holy ground.

This Collect gives us both **purpose** and **petition**.

Its **purpose** is clear:

before the suffering of the cross, Christ revealed his glory — not as spectacle, but as preparation.

Its **petition** is bold:

that we may behold his light by faith,
that his radiance may strengthen us to bear our own crosses,
and that we may be transformed into his likeness, “from glory to glory.”

This prayer is our compass today.
It tells us where we stand, and it tells us where we are going.

It names the trajectory of the Christian life:

Revelation to Transformation to Mission.

And that trajectory will guide us this morning. From Mountaintop to Mountaintop. From Glory to the Witnessing of Majesty. But before we start our climb, let us pause and imagine we are standing at the base of a great mountain – the summit shrouded in clouds. Lifting our gaze, inspiring awe, and reminding us that there is more beyond our immediate view.

Mountains are thin places, spaces where heaven leans close and the presence of God breaks through. And our mountains today reveal a pattern.

The Mountain of God, named Sinai or Horeb, a place of God’s Glory, where a covenant was made with God’s People, and the Law was written in stone.

The Mountain of the Gospel, traditionally identified as Mount Tabor, where Christ’s Glory was revealed in the light of Transfiguration, the Law and Prophets fulfilled in him.

These encounters were witnessed by the peoples of God, the 12 tribes of Israel, and then by the Apostles, but this is not just their story. This is also our story, our witness.

However, the pattern is still unmistakable:

God reveals glory → God transforms his people → God sends them into mission.

Epiphany has been a season of revelation — Christ made known to the nations, his light shining in signs and wonders. But revelation is not the end, but a beginning. Christ's glory is not given to keep us on the mountain; it is given to send us into the valley.

And so, with the Collect as our compass and the mountain before us, we begin where the story begins — on Sinai, wrapped in cloud and fire, where God speaks and a people are formed.

II. Exodus – Gods glory revealed.

We now stand at the foot of Sinai, where the Children of Israel are addressed by God and learn to see themselves as a people. Historian Thomas Cahill notes that Sinai is more than a place of lawgiving — it's where Israel first experiences God as a personal presence who speaks, commands, and calls them into relationship, not just as a distant force.

Moses is summoned higher. The elders remain below, the people farther still, but Moses is called into the cloud. The ascent itself is a drawing near to God, a step into mystery, leaving behind what is familiar, entering the realm where heaven bends low.

Then scripture quietly notes, **“The Cloud covered the mountain for six days.”** Six Days of Waiting, Stillness and Interior Preparation before God's voice finally speaks.

As Cahill observes, this is the moment when Israel learns that revolution cannot be rushed, that Holiness demands readiness, and only a quiet soul can listen. Glory comes to those who are patient. This is echoed in the gospel, when Jesus brings his disciples up the mountain.

To those waiting below, the overwhelming Glory of YHWH is a consuming flame atop the mountain, inaccessible and terrifying. Moses is invited into that very fire, finding God's presence, personal and relational, up close. God's holiness is majestic, yet intimate, and the radiance that terrifies, ultimately leads to personal transformation.

In the midst of the cloud, God makes the covenant – the Law inscribed on tablet of stone. A pivotal moment, birthing a moral consciousness. A people not living a random existence, but following a God, speaking truth, and calling for justice and mercy.

Gods law is sacred, but external. It orders life and governs behavior, but cannot transform life or renew the heart.

The later prophets knew this. Jeremiah would one day speak of a deeper covenant:
“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.”

Not written in stone, but inside each individual, inscribed by the Holy Spirit, to shape their identity from within.

Sinai marks the beginning of that promise. The stone tablets hint a future when the Word will shape each human heart, and the mountain's fire foreshadows the flames of Pentecost. The covenant founded in the wilderness will be a framework that will be fulfilled by our covenant through Christ.

Our psalm reinforces God's Glory in Holiness and how Moses and others mediated on behalf of God's people, interceding in the awesome Presence. YHWH reigning - in Justice and Righteousness, not by distance, but by a personal covenant with the people, inviting us into relationship with the divine.

What experience have you equated with a mountaintop?

Have you sensed a feeling of quiet waiting and heard the still small voice of the Holy Spirit?

When did you know the divine invitation meant for a personal relationship?

III. Matthew – Christ Transfigured

From the Gods covenant on Sinai and the holiness of the psalm, we ascend another mountain, now with Jesus. Just as others have before, Jesus leads his followers, specifically Peter, James, and John, up this mountain, long identified by Christian scholarly tradition as Mount Tabor, rising above the Galilean plain. Scripture's mountains are **thin places**, where the veil between the human and the divine grows transparent, where God's presence breaks through with unmistakable clarity.

And then it happens.

The ordinary is transfigured.

The familiar face of Jesus shines like the sun.

His garments become dazzling white.

The radiance that once descended on Sinai now emanates from him.

He is not reflecting glory — he is revealing it.

This is the glory of the Son, the glory of the Logos, the glory that has always been his.

Suddenly **Moses** and **Elijah** appear beside him.

Moses, the one who entered the cloud and fire, who received the Law written by the finger of God.

Elijah, the prophet who fled to Horeb and encountered God not in wind or earthquake or fire, but in a “still small voice,” a whisper that reshaped his calling.

Their presence is not accidental.

They stand for the **Law and the Prophets** — the entire story of Israel.

And they stand with Jesus because he is their fulfillment.

What was written on stone and spoken in whispers now stands embodied in the Son.

Then the cloud descends — the same cloud that covered Sinai for six days, the same cloud that overshadowed the tent of meeting, the same cloud that filled the temple with glory. And from the cloud comes the voice:

“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

The command is unmistakable.

The center of revelation has shifted.

No longer do we look to stone tablets alone.

No longer do we listen only for prophetic whispers.

Now we listen to Christ — the living Word, the fulfillment of Law and Prophets.

The disciples fall to the ground in fear, overwhelmed by glory.

But Jesus comes near.

He touches them, He lifts them up.

Glory and compassion meet in that touch.

And when they look up, they see **“no one except Jesus alone.”**

Moses fades.

Elijah disappears.

Christ remains.

This is the moment when the invitation to **exchange our life for Gods** comes into view.

Bios (in Greek) is the life we know — the life of striving, fear, limitation, and mortality.
It is the life we manage, protect, and cling to.
It is the life the disciples brought up the mountain.

Zoe (also from the Greek) is the life of God — eternal, uncreated, radiant, overflowing.
It is the life Christ possesses in himself.
It is the life he reveals to his followers.
It is the life he offers to share with us.

And here is the invitation:
We are not only witnesses to this glory —
we are **invited into it**.
Invited into the transformation of **this** exchanged life.
Invited to surrender our Bios and receive his Zoe.
Invited to let his radiance reshape our identity, our desires, our very being.

The Transfiguration is not given for spectacle.
It is given for strength.
It prepares the disciples for the valley below — for the cross, for suffering, for mission.
It prepares us as well.

V. Eyewitnesses of Majesty and Threading the mountains together

Like the disciples we can be witnesses to the majesty of transfiguration, Like the disciples, we have been overwhelmed with the glory of the Son of God. But to bring the experience down to something more human, I invite you to recall you own personal moments of majesty – moments when creation itself seemed to open a window into the divine.

A sunrise breaking over the horizon, painting the sky with fire.
The vast silence of a canyon carved by ages.
The towering cliffs of Yosemite catching the first light of day.
A distant mountaintop glowing in morning radiance.
A starlit night so clear it feels like the heavens are leaning close.

These moments stir awe, humility, wonder.
They remind us that we are small and God is great.

They awaken in us the same instinct Jesus' followers felt on Tabor — the instinct to worship, to listen, to believe.

Let me share one of Mine.

I was in a car going up a mountain road. I was about 7 years old and my family was driving up to an interfaith camp in the Sierra Nevada's named Hume Lake. You know those types of car trips, the family talking about everything and nothing, just passing the time.

I had been raised in faith, most recently, in the Mennonite Brethren of my dad's stepfather, but I hadn't personally made the choice. Sitting in the car reflecting, something stirred in me, a nudge, a pull. A sense of something, based on the early childhood Sunday School and the faith communities that shaped my first understandings.

And there it was. A choice, a decision. Not something my parents were pushing me towards, but simply present for and supportive. God – Christ – wasn't just an idea, but a Someone, and a Presence that was very near.

What I felt in that moment was overwhelming. Not warm and cozy—more like standing at the edge of a cliff and realizing the world is infinitely larger than you imagined. A sense of the holy that was both beautiful and almost frightening in its vastness. And yet, in that immensity, I felt invited. Called. Urged by the Holy Spirit to step toward Christ with my own small but sincere “yes.”

That mountain road became, for me, a kind of Tabor. Not because I saw anything with my eyes, but because something in me was transfigured. A child's heart awakened to the presence of the living God.

When we step back from these readings and reflections, a thread appears. A pattern woven through every mountain we have climbed.

On Sinai, God reveals his holiness in fire and cloud.

The Law is written on stone — external, authoritative, good — yet still outside the human heart.

On Tabor, holiness takes on a face.

The radiance that once descended on Sinai now shines from Jesus himself.

Moses and Elijah stand beside him — the Law and the Prophets — and then fade, leaving Christ alone as the fulfillment of the entire story.

And through it all, the pattern is unmistakable:

Stone → Heart

Sinai's external law pointing toward Jeremiah's promise of a law written within.

Law → Logos

Moses and Elijah giving way to Christ, the living Word.

Bios → Zoe

Our limited, striving life invited into Christ's radiant, eternal life —
not explained in full here, but named as the transformation the Gospel makes possible.

Glory → Cross

The vision on the mountain preparing disciples for the valley below.

Witness → Transformation

The Apostles memory becoming the church's proclamation, calling us into the same change.

This is the rhythm of God's revelation:

God reveals → God transforms → God sends.

And this is the rhythm of the Christian life.

Epiphany has shown us the glory.

Lent will teach us the obedience.

Easter will reveal the victory.

But before we descend the mountain, we must ask:

What does this mean for us?

How do we live this pattern?

How do we carry this glory into the world?

VI. Practical Application – Living the Vision

If the mountains of Scripture reveal a pattern —

God reveals → God transforms → God sends —

then Lent becomes the season when we step into that pattern with intention.

The Transfiguration is not simply a story to admire.
It is a summons.
It is an invitation.
It is a preparation for the life we are called to live.

1. Beholding Christ's Glory by Faith

Epiphany has shown us the radiance of Christ —
in his baptism, in his miracles, in his teaching, and now in his transfiguration.

But Lent asks us to **behold that glory by faith**,
even when the light is hidden,
even when the path leads downward,
even when the valley feels long.

2. Being Strengthened to Bear the Cross

The Collect names this directly:
that beholding Christ's light may **strengthen us to bear our cross**.

The Transfiguration is not an escape from suffering.
It is preparation for it.

3. Being Transformed Into His Likeness

The vision on the mountain is not only about Jesus' glory.
It is about **our transformation**.

Paul says we are being changed "from glory to glory."
The Transfiguration is the promise of what God intends for us.

4. Listening to Christ Above All Voices

On the mountain, the Father gives one command:
"Listen to him."

Lent is the season when we quiet the noise so we can hear the Word.

5. Carrying the Mission Into the World

Revelation leads to transformation.
Transformation leads to mission.

We do not stay on the mountain.

We descend — strengthened, changed, and sent.

VII. Transition to Conclusion

And so, the pattern holds:

God reveals → God transforms → God sends.

The light we have seen is the light we now carry.

The presence we have encountered is the presence we now embody.

The holiness we have glimpsed is the holiness that now shapes our lives.

VIII. Conclusion – From Glory to Cross, From Mountain to Mission

We began this morning with a prayer — a prayer the Church has carried across centuries, a prayer that set our feet on holy ground:

And now, having climbed the mountains of Scripture, we see how perfectly that prayer has guided our steps.

On Sinai, God revealed his holiness in fire and cloud, writing the covenant on stone.

In the psalm, that holiness was proclaimed in worship and justice.

On Tabor, the radiance of God shone from the face of Jesus, the fulfillment of Law and Prophets.

In Peter's testimony, the glory he witnessed became the lamp for the church, the assurance that Scripture's promises are true.

The thread is clear:

God reveals → God transforms → God sends.

This is the rhythm of Epiphany leading us into Lent.

This is the rhythm of discipleship.

This is the rhythm of the Christian life.

The glory revealed on the mountain is not meant to keep us there.

It is meant to strengthen us for the valley.

It is meant to prepare us for the cross.

It is meant to send us into the world as witnesses of Christ's light.

And so, the Collect becomes not only our beginning, but our ending —
our prayer and our commissioning:

That we may **behold Christ's glory by faith**,
even when the path grows dim.

That we may **be strengthened to bear the cross**,
trusting that the radiance of Tabor goes with us.

That we may **be changed into his likeness**,
from glory to glory,
from one degree of grace to the next.

That we may **descend the mountain as witnesses**,
carrying Christ's light into the world.

For the glory we have glimpsed today is not left behind.
It is written on our hearts.
It is carried in our lives.
It is the lamp that guides our steps.
It is the promise that sustains our hope.

And so, as we turn toward Lent, we do not turn in fear.
We turn in faith.
We turn in strength.
We turn in the confidence that the One who shone on the mountain
walks with us in the valley.

May we behold his glory.
May we bear his cross.
May we be changed into his likeness.
And may we carry his light into the world.

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.