

“LET’S GO FOR A WALK!”
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Transfiguration Sunday

Matthew 17:1-9

If you’re a fan of the movies, you probably already know that tonight is a big night for Hollywood! It’s Academy Awards night! Yep, the night when all the stars come out and all of the best performances of the year are judged! It’s a great night, and it’s usually fun to watch.

A couple of years ago, one of the movies that was celebrated was called “The Queen.” Do you remember that one? Helen Mirren, in my opinion one of the greatest actresses around today, portrayed Queen Elizabeth, and she was incredible. At times, you actually felt like you were watching the Queen herself!

If you didn’t see that movie, the whole plot surrounded the tragic death of Princess Diana in a car crash, and how the royal family handled the whole thing. Suffice it to say that they didn’t handle it well, and they took a beating from the British public.

Tony Blair, who was Prime Minister at the time, helped out in whatever way he could, and helped to heal the breach between the royals and the people. At the very end of the movie, some time has passed since Diana’s death, and Prime Minister Blair sits down for a meeting with the Queen. Things are still a little tenuous and awkward, and then at one point, the Queen asks Mr. Blair if he likes to walk. He says “Yes,” and she replies something like “Good. I always think things go better when you’re walking.”

You know what? I think Jesus thought much the same thing, because if you look throughout scripture, including both last week’s Gospel lesson and this week’s, Jesus is all about walking – last week walking on water, this walk walking with three of his disciples up the Mount of Transfiguration.

When Jesus said to anyone “Let’s go for a walk!” you pretty much knew something was up, and so it was. Take today’s lesson, for example. Jesus invited the three purportedly most close to him – Peter, James and John – to go on a walk with him up a mountain. And when they got to the top, something incredible happened – He was transfigured – right before their eyes. His face shone, his clothes were dazzling white! Then Moses and Elijah – both long dead – showed up – Moses, representing the law, Elijah, the prophets. And as if that wasn’t startling enough, then they heard the voice of God Himself – “This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased; listen to Him!”

In that moment, on that walk, those disciples perhaps knew more clearly than ever who Jesus was, and what He came to do. They knew He was the Son of God. They knew He had come to fulfill the law and the prophets. It was an incredible moment in time for all of them!

Now, let me ask you something. What if they had said “no” when Jesus invited them to go on a walk? What if they had said “No”? Think what they would have missed.

Friends, in much the same way we miss so much if we don’t accept Jesus’ invitation to walk with Him. Part of being a faithful Christian is walking with Jesus – not just staying in one place, never growing, never exploring. Sometimes that walk takes us to high places – moments of pure joy, like those which the disciples experienced on the mountain that day; and sometimes that walk takes us through tough times, like Peter’s rough ride on the water last week, when we hang on to Jesus for dear life!

We have opportunities to walk with Him all the time, but I think we have a special opportunity to walk with Him during Lent, which begins this coming week, on Ash Wednesday. I think in Lent especially, Jesus holds out His hand to you and to me, and says “Let’s take a walk.”

I hope and pray all of us will say “Yes.” Because during Lent we have the unique opportunity, in a short period of time – seven weeks or so – to see all of His life up close and personal, and to walk the way of the cross with Him, and to realize in a very personal way, what He did for us and our salvation.

How you make the walk with Jesus through Lent is totally up to you. You can say yes or you can say no. You can maintain the status quo or you can step out in faith and journey where He takes you. Let me remind you that there are all sorts of tools and ministries available to help you with your Lenten walk.

There’s the Lenten devotional that has been written by members and friends of our church. It’s available today – downstairs near the Welcome Center – and it’s also available online on our website. Maybe your walk through Lent will center around using those devotions and some quiet time each day to draw closer to Jesus.

I surely hope that being in worship every week in Lent will be the way you choose to walk as well. During Lent, I’ll be preaching a series of sermons on Jesus, and the many ways He revealed Himself – as a man, a Savior, a Healer, the Living Water, among others. Hopefully, through the sermons and through worship, you will remember again just how much He loved you – so much He gave His life for you.

And of course, there are special studies you can be a part of during Lent. Perhaps your walk will take you to one of those. In those classes, you have the opportunity to delve more deeply into the Word and hear the thoughts of others, and share yours with them.

I could go on and on, for there is no shortage of ways for you to walk with Jesus through Lent. So I hope and pray you will make that commitment to Him and to yourself!

And if you're unsure about it, let me remind you of something else. Very often in the scripture, actually, most often, Jesus made "the walk" invitation to several people at the same time. So people walked together with their friends and Jesus.

There are few things more meaningful than making a spiritual journey with friends. Don't believe me? Ask the choir about the walk with Jesus they do together every week. It's a powerful thing, and we hear it in their music.

Or talk to someone in a Sunday School class. We've got a lot of great classes, but I'm thinking right now of one class in particular – the Women's Class. Over and over again, I hear from the members how much it means to them. They study the Bible and the stories of faith, and they wrestle with it for their own lives – all the while growing closer to one another and to the Lord.

Or talk to any of the men, women, and youth who went to the Men's and Women's Retreats or the Conference Youth Rally recently. They walked together on weekend journeys with Jesus, and it's unlike anything they do any other time of the year, and it's made all the more special because they're with each other.

And let me come back to worship again – isn't part of the joy of worship being together with everyone else? I know it is, because I watch all of you from up here, and I hear the buzz before worship, and I watch how sometimes "The Peace" nearly gets out of control. I also know that when someone is missing, they are truly missed and hopefully someone calls them and checks up on them. Part of the joy of worship is being together here with everyone else who's also walking the journey with Jesus. That's why I invite you to make a commitment to be in worship every Sunday of Lent – because worship is so much better for everyone when you're here!

My friends, Jesus wants you to take a walk with Him this Lent! I promise that, if you do, if you commit fully to your walk with Christ, you will come to understand Him more fully, experience Him more completely, love Him more dearly, and most of all, truly know the price He paid for your freedom.

And I also promise you that if you walk with Him fully and faithfully during Lent, you will never experience a more glorious Easter morning!

So as we begin Lent in just a few days, I'm not going to ask you to give up something for Lent, I'm going to invite you instead to "take up something for Lent." Walk with Jesus, draw close to Him, give Him your time, give Him your heart.

As you come forward for communion this morning, and kneel at the chancel rail, ask Him to guide your steps on the walk ahead. It could be the best journey you ever make! May it be so. Amen.

