

What dreams of yours have not been realized and what goals have not yet been completed? What have you been looking for or trying to find in your life? What is it that will fill your emptiness or make your life more peaceful or complete? Jesus' disciples were on the same vision quest with Jesus when one day he invited Peter, James, and John to take a side trip.

That is the backdrop to our Gospel from Mark. The disciples were following their dreams and had Jesus all figured out and didn't want to let him go. Suddenly, on the top of a mountain everything was confused by a light so bright they couldn't even remember what they had been looking for. While it is impossible to imagine what went on in that vision of glory, it helps if we remember the audience to that transfiguration was no different than you and me.

Jesus was ministering to people confused by an oppressive government, a religious system that left more questions than answers, and the normal fare of poor harvests, crummy weather, illness, and death. Jesus had healed people from disease or physical impairments. He cast out demons and even raised the dead to life. He went out of his way to embrace and care for some who were ignored or harassed and had felt no love in their lives.

Surrounded by darkness, Jesus came to bring light! And then on a mountaintop three disciples glimpsed heaven's glory. Who would want to leave such a powerful glow?

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Along our neighborhood walking path, surrounded by trees, a garage has 10-foot-long fluorescent light tubes on the back wall. A friend, who is our neighborhood search engine explained the owner's hobby is collecting moths. They are drawn to those special lights and refuse to leave.

That scene helps me understand the dilemma of the disciples. No one had ever seen what they saw, and it was more than they could comprehend. They were following Jesus because they had no choice, he was special, but now they saw he was even more special than they imagined, and they had front row seats.

Of course, they wanted the glow to last and the vision to continue. They wanted to memorialize the moment, take pictures, and keep everyone in place. They didn't want to leave that mountain or that glory!

Jesus quickly made it clear his mission was not to bask in the spotlight, but to enter the caves and valleys where people really live! Having been drawn to the light, disciples were called to follow Jesus and see just how he would finally light up every darkness and conquer even death!

We are no different than Peter, James, and John. As we are surrounded by the darkness of a broken world, or caught in the shadows of grief and fear, our greatest hope is for a light that can chase such moments away. That is our daily search and explains many of our hopes and dreams. And if we find what we are searching for, we never want to let go, and simply want to enjoy the moment and bask in such light.

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The world is full of many bright lights that invite and lure and offer promise. Too often in the darkness of illness, frustrations at work, or loneliness at home, we search for but have trouble finding the right kind of light. Earthly lights work for a while but the darkness that is behind them never completely goes away.

The light of Jesus love is unique in that it chases every darkness and brings warmth to every cold shadow. Mark's gospel reveals how Jesus' ministry brings heavenly light to earthly darkness so faithful people might never lose the glory of God's love. That is why Jesus moved disciples away from the mountain where, like people who flee Michigan in the winter for a southern sun, they wanted to bask in the glory of that heavenly warmth and glow.

We don't understand exactly how Moses and Elijah and a dazzling Jesus really happened. But trying to understand that is like me sitting in a darkroom, watching chemicals slowly change a blank piece of paper into a picture. Rather than being able to completely understand the chemistry, I must simply trust that this process will get a photo out into the light.

Jesus gave disciples a glimpse of real glory to give them a taste and hope for a brighter light that he would lead them to. Like wise men following a star, he calls his disciples to move from our comfort and let him lead us home. Disciples would witness more healings, exorcisms, and parables, but like the vision on the mountain, they were simply "glimpses of glory," not the ultimate bright light of Easter that would chase away darkness forever. None of these were the complete story – only a prelude to the brightest light of all. For until Jesus descended into the deepest valley of death, there could be no understanding of the glory to be revealed on Easter, our promise and hope for all time.

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I once did a police ride-along and witnessed these extremes. Two parents were fighting over custody of a two-year-old boy. The father cared for him, but the mom broke into his apartment late at night and demanded her two year old son. She wanted to borrow him, so she could pretend for her social worker she deserved the monthly check for his care. The apartment was filled with police, a father holding his baby boy, and a screaming mother. I stood in the hallway with a five-year-old girl, the daughter from another father; the little girl was bewildered, quiet, forgotten, and alone.

I knelt down, asking who fixed her hair, so full of braids and beads, and her face lit up as she answered. I saw a sparkle in her eyes (that I knew the darkness was trying to chase away) and saw a vision of what sin does in our world in so many ways. My prayer for that little girl who had so little going for her was the darkness she was surrounded by would not overpower the sparkle of life that God had placed into her "just-beginning life."

That glimpse of light in a little girl's eyes remind me of the hope of God's love. It was for darkness such as that hallway that Jesus came into our world. He came not to live in the glory he deserved but to journey into the valley of the shadow of death. Lent remembers his mission for us.

Never forget the story of wise men who followed a distant light in the darkness and were led to the bright joy of an empty tomb. Whoever we are, whatever we face, let us follow the light rather than be overwhelmed by darkness. And as that light of hope reflects off our living, others (strange as it might seem) might even be drawn to that same light, not by any strength of our own, but by the reflection of Jesus' hope-filled love. People who live in the darkness long for light, and faith reveals that light for the world.

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