

**Sermon by Amber Scovell – March 2, 2025**  
**Luke 9:X-X**

Since it's youth Sunday, I figured I would begin today's sermon by telling you a little bit about what I was like a teenager. I used to have a little tradition at FCC's youth group where I would begin each class by telling the students a high school story about myself. The older students have heard these stories can attest that I was super cool in high school.

I didn't play any sports, I was often picked last in gym class, and I thought the height of fashion was rocking my favorite t-shirt. It was bright blue and said in big white letters, "I like Jesus." So as I was saying I was very very cool. I was also very active in my church growing up, hence the T-shirt and my current profession. Often times as a teen I was asked to preach, run a Sunday school lesson, or lead a Bible study. Not much has changed I guess.

But I remember each time I was asked to speak about God, I took it very seriously. Even at a young age I had an understanding that the vocabulary I use to discuss God and religion can be life altering for someone. It can be difference between pursuing a lifelong relationship with the creator or never stepping foot into a church again. So, I never taken speaking about God lightly, but today's sermon might be the most serious I have ever taken this responsibility. That's because it is not composed merely of my thoughts, but of the teens at FCC. This sermon is based on information they have given me either in conversations over coffee, youth group meetings, or a google doc that was sent out to them last week. This sermon is their words and it is my privilege to convey their thoughts and their hearts to each of you today.

So, let's get into it. The passage begins with "Now about 8 days after these sayings..." So 8 days after what exactly? Backtracking a bit Jesus had just predicted his death to the disciples. So this is about a week after having a really emotional and intense conversation with his closest friends and he brings three of them up onto a mountain with Him to pray.

It makes sense that Jesus needs this spiritual retreat after such a difficult conversation with his followers. They are still processing that they are going to lose him and he might still be processing that he will be leaving Earth soon too. There's a lot of emotions leading up to this moment. Leading up to the transfiguration story.

So, Jesus goes up this mountain to pray and all the sudden his physical appearance changes. His face, his clothes, everything changes and he starts talking to Moses and Elijah. Now, as you may or may not recall...Moses and Elijah were not living at the same time of Jesus. So this is a big deal. Jesus, essentially, is speaking to two dead men. And of all the people in the world, why these two? Some of our teens offered up that if given the choice they would prefer to speak to people like Marilyn Monroe, George Washington, Kobe Bryant or a youtuber named, techno blade. (*I have no idea who that last one is.*)

But either way, they wouldn't have chosen Moses and Elijah. Fair enough. In fact, it is a little strange. Of all the biblical figures Jesus could meet with in this moment, Abraham, Noah, Ruth...why Moses and Elijah?

There are a few interesting theories. One being that Moses represents the law, while Elijah represents the prophets. Meaning that Jesus came to Earth to fulfill both the law requirements and the prophetic promises of the Messiah. In other words their presence highlights the affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah or the savior the Jewish people have been waiting for.

Another theory is that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah all share a special connection or bond. And we can see similarities in their interactions with God. For example, Moses speaks to God on Mount Sinai, Elijah speaks to God on Mount Horeb, and now Jesus is having a divine encounter with God on a mountain top as well.

Or perhaps Elijah and Moses were there to further highlight that Jesus is God's son. While Elijah and Moses were both pivotal in God's mission, they were not Jesus. Jesus surpasses them in authority. When God says "This is my son, listen to him" the other 2 fade away, leaving behind Jesus.

Either way Jesus converses with them for a time while three of his disciples: Peter, John, and James sleep.

Which leads me to one theory an FCC student had. Perhaps the entire scenario was a dream, but a very significant one. Maybe Jesus is greeted by Elijah and Moses because they are trying to comfort him. They know what the experience of both death and the afterlife is like. This student recalls having dreams of loved ones who have passed away and feels like they hold a deep significance.

If we assume the entire scenario was not a dream though, imagine waking up to this scene. Your friend, Jesus standing on a mountain next to two men who have not been alive for years. And beyond even that your friend doesn't look like himself.

That's what I personally find so moving about this story actually. We just read that Jesus' face has been transformed, even his clothing. Yet, upon waking Peter immediately recognizes Jesus. Peter and Jesus were so well connected. Peter loved Jesus so deeply that he could recognize him in his true form without a word spoken or a question asked.

When asked what issues matter more to teenagers than adults, almost every student mentioned relationships. They noted how in high school there is pressure to fit in. There is pressure to make friends. There is pressure to choose the right kind of friends. They noted that they want to surround themselves with friends who make them feel valued and seen. They want friends who will impact their lives positively.

They noted that it's not always easy to determine who these friends should be. They wish their parents understood how much this matters to them and how much energy they expend thinking about this and cultivating these relationships. What is more biblical than relationships with others? Peter and Jesus friendship is a beautiful example of the kind of friendship not just the teens are referencing. Jesus makes Peter better. Peter loves Jesus. True, beautiful friendship. And when you love or someone your natural instinct is to protect it.

Peter sees Jesus, Elijah, and Moses standing on the mountain and his first thought is to build each of them a shelter. His first thought is to protect them. There is a lot going on in the World today and to be honest, my favorite thing about working with the teens at FCC is that this generation of youth cares so much about what's going on in the world. They have a genuine concern and care for people and cultures that don't even affect them.

Some of the concerns students have shared with me on a national level include school safety and immigration. On a global level they are concerned about people who don't have access to food or clean water, care for the environment, and children/families finding themselves as casualties of war. As a teenager, I was highly empathetic, but I'll admit I was so focused on my own life and my own struggles, I hardly looked outside the scope of them to see how others were suffering.

Not only do our students care about what's happening in the world, but they take action. The same way Peter's immediate response to seeing Jesus was to take action and shelter him. Our students want to take steps to make changes too. Our students shared that their initial instinct is to help, but sometimes they don't know where to begin. They want to make the shift from helpless to empowered.

Here is what our FCC Youth suggests to make this switch:

Let yourself feel all of it. When you hear about an injustice happening in the world. Don't ignore it. Allow yourself to feel angry, sad, disappointed, etc.

Step Two: Educate yourself. Each student noted the next step is to gather as much knowledge about the situation as possible. Learn why this is happening, learn all perspectives on the situation and then you can learn how to help. Recognize what is and isn't within your power. Small steps can make a big change. Our students can make a big change.

Peter was protecting Jesus' physical body by trying to shelter him. Our students are protecting Jesus' teachings by living like him.

They noted that the world would be a better place if we lived by Jesus' teachings of loving your neighbor. They feel that too many people are still judged by their race, gender, and religion. While we are still hung up on these things, Jesus wasn't. In his time on Earth, Jesus wasn't able to meet everyone. Jesus wasn't able to heal everyone. Jesus wasn't able to teach everyone. Yet, the small things he did. The people he was able to interact with made a lasting impact on the entire world. Small acts make a big difference.

Loving others, being patient, being accepting. Living like Jesus is how we go from helpless to empowered.

If we went up on a mountain, our faces probably wouldn't change. Our clothes probably wouldn't glow. We are not divine as Jesus was. But we are human. Just like Moses, Just like Elijah, and also...just like Jesus.

The transfiguration story affirms Jesus' divinity. It also showcases the divine need for humanity too. For humans like Moses who led people out of slavery. For humans like Elijah who aren't afraid to challenge leaders he finds problematic. For humans like Peter who love and protect deeply. For humans like you.

Never tire of doing good. Never tire of doing what is right. Amen.