



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Devotion Time: Week : Matthew chapters 17 and 18
Prayer Time

God of the Law and the Prophets and the Grace in between, you show us your true self in Jesus, who died and rose again that we may always know your perfect love. Draw us closer to Jesus through the Law and the Prophets and your unending Grace so that we may reflect him, and therefore you, in all we do. In his name we pray. Amen

The transfiguration story is a resurrection story. Some scholars will even point out that it is the resurrection story, but Matthew placed it here in the middle of the story as both a precursor to the resurrection and as encouragement for the journey to get there. So let's find ourselves on this mountaintop today. Who are the people you would climb a mountain with to experience Jesus?

Take a moment to reflect on that. These are those people you are closest with, who you talk with about faith, who maybe worship with you, or maybe you study the Bible with. Who are the James, John and Peter, who are going up this mountaintop today to experience the revelation of Jesus?

At the top of the mountain, Jesus stands with Moses and Elijah. These are historic figures for the disciples. They obviously had no photographs to know them, only their historic legend. How do you recognize God's Word in all its forms? Is it a favorite translation of the Bible? Is it a favorite passage you keep going back to again and again for faith encouragement? How do you know you are actually seeing God's full word here in front of you? Is there a pastor who shined a particular light on something that has stuck with you? Is there a litmus test you have for proving whether what you hear is truly God's Word or not? James, John, and Peter all recognized the legends. How do you recognize God's Word?

The disciples wanted to stay on this mountaintop, with the fullness of God's glory wrapped around them. They wanted to build temples right there as houses for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. They did not want to leave this space -- what keeps you close to God's Word? How do you try to hold onto the mountaintop experience? What glory are you trying to capture so you never have to leave its presence?

The moment, though, does end. Peter, James, and John are left standing with only Jesus, who directs them back down the mountaintop. Think about your last deep encounter with the Word of God. What is your take away? What hymn were you still singing as you left worship? What prayer remains on your lips long after you heard it spoken? What comes with you into the valley, the daily living, the back to work, back to chores, back to family, back to errands, back to grandkids, back to ordinary?

Living faithfully consists of returning up the mountaintop. It lets us see God's glory, where we have been, where we are going, and it reminds us God is with us -- always.

Mountaintops

Hiking 50 miles with the scout troop was not all flat land. The Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin follows a path of moraine hills. So we were hiking up hill a lot, and yes, as we hiked down and back trails, we were often hiking up hill both ways. Talk about not fair!

But as we reached each hill top, the view was incredible. We were looking over glacial formed lakes and bogs and forests. We were seeing the home of bears and deer and porcupine and beaver and squirrels. We could see where we had come from and where we were going. And then we headed down the trail, back to the valley, back to one step after another, one more mile which would lead to the next mile and the next hill top.

This is our faith journey. We are constantly walking up hill to see God, and down again to the valley to live as God's people.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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