

Gobsmacked

I remember it like it was yesterday. I must have been about 12 years old. I had a close friend named Jeff. Jeff and I were inseparable. Both of our parents were quite strict and we all went to the same church.

We would sometimes spend weekends together doing sleepovers. I remember that while we got together he had a color television and more channels than we did in our home. We would sneak into his older brother's room to listen to the hard rock radio station and look at his heavy metal albums.

His parents were heavy sleepers which was great for sleepovers. We would play games until late into the night and finally fall asleep in our sleeping bags in the living room.

One night we got sneak out. We were not only going to sneak out, but we were going to walk down to the drive-in theater that was on the edge of town near the neighborhood that Jeff lived in. There was a hill behind the theater where we had heard people could sit and watch the movie without paying.

So, we tip toed to the door, made sure it didn't creak when opening, slipped outside, and began our journey toward the theater.

The cool Nebraska summer night, the excitement of doing something we shouldn't, and being free was so exhilarating. It was like we flew to behind the theater and then trudged up the hill perched behind the back fence.

The movie was already started and even without sound we could tell it was a stinker. We made up dialogue and laughed at our wit.

As we got to up to leave, I could feel the air cool. I had gotten a little separated from Jeff and a was startled to see something that I had never seen before. It was a shiny disc hovering above Jeff, it was clearly a spaceship of some type.

Suddenly next to Jeff stood two glowing figures. They looked like Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. I was so shocked I didn't know what to do. I think I said something stupid. I heard a voice say something that made no sense to me from out of nowhere. Then, just as

they had occurred these two figures and the UFO were gone.

Jeff acted like nothing had happened at all. He told me not to tell anyone about this. I haven't until this day.

So, do you believe me?

Brian has gone crazy. He will soon be wearing tin foil and saying that the CIA has inserted microchips in his arm through a vaccine. Watch him.

When I think about it, there are two things that I understand about this text and one thing I do not.

First, I am with Peter. I do not know what to say about the transfiguration. Every time I start I become dumbstruck. I know that it is a centrally important part of our faith story in the Bible. Yet, like Peter, I feel like whatever I say about it does not live up to the spectacular idea of what actually happened on that day. It is the text that I am the most frightened of preaching upon.

Second. Having said my story about Jeff out loud it should be no mystery to any of us why Jesus told the

disciples that they were not to tell this story to anyone until after being raised from the dead. Everyone would have thought that they were crazy. Until something greater, like a resurrection happened, it would be best not to tell everyone that the patriarchs of the Jewish faith were beamed down and glowing next to Jesus. The people who might believe it might not be the sort of people that this nascent Jesus movement wanted.

Last, there is one thing that I do not understand. That is how to make the transfiguration into something that fits into a neat sermon. A sermon that inspires, encourages, and challenges you. It has always been the text I fear. Yet, that is not totally true. I am comfortable with mystery.

I don't have to have a rational explanation, a pithy antidote, or a neat little tidy bow to finish this sermon. I can leave this a mystery. What does it mean? I am not sure. There are commentary after commentary after commentary that will give you what they believe is a concise explanation. Sometimes we just have to have faith that something is bigger than our complete understanding. It is okay to say we don't know, this does not invalidate our faith.

When I look at the artistic representations of this event of transfiguration I realize that something happened on that hill that inspires, creates, and perhaps transfigures us. That is enough for me this morning.

It does not mean that we do not believe in science, it does not mean that we do not believe in logic, and it certainly does not mean that we are less intelligent by believing in mystery. There are many things that will trouble the waters of our mind that will take an entire life's journey to live out. We may never get full disclosure or revelation, but our refraction of the answer is important to the whole.

The alternative country singer Iris Dement has a song whose words are instructive to me on such instances. The title of the song is appropriately, "Let the Mystery Be".

Everybody is a wonderin' what and where they all came from
Everybody is a worryin' 'bout where
They're gonna go when the whole thing's done
But no one knows for certain and so it's all the same to me

I think I'll just let the mystery be
I think I'll just let the mystery be.

I agree, I think I will let the mystery be and stand back in
awe.

Thanks be to God.