

A Glimpse of Eternity by Holly C. W. Aastuen
February 15 2015 Mark 9:2-9

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Since this story so emphasizes the dazzling glow of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, we also need to pay attention to glory, to remember the times when we've sensed the presence

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I took the dog uphill
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candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

A clergywoman named Ruth Everhart, shared in her blog of November of 2011 these stories:

Last week I got a breathless phone call from my daughter that began: "First of all, Mom, you need to know that I'm okay." That is not my favorite sentence. She was calling from her car on the shoulder of the inner loop of the DC Beltway during rush hour.

It was a rainy night. The beltway has four lanes and she had been traveling in the far left lane; as she approached her exit and moved right one lane, her car began to skid. She remembered not to pump the brake, but to tap it repeatedly. Even so, her car did a 180.

A Glimpse of Eternity by Holly C. W. Aastuen
February 15 2015 Mark 9:2-9

She was in the center lane, facing oncoming traffic. Headlights were in her eyes. She pulled the wheel the other way and did a 180 the opposite way. She came to rest alongside the concrete retaining wall, though not touching it. I asked, "Wasn't there a lot of traffic?" She said, "Oh yes, when I looked back there was a whole line of cars, but there was this sort of path that opened up. It was God."

It might have been otherwise.

Last week, Ruth Everhart continues, I had a routine mammogram. I got a call back because they needed to do more comprehensive imaging. This time they did a spot compression on one side. I waited in my little pink gown. Then I got called in for a sonogram. I watched on the screen. The technician moved her wand around and located a black circle. It looked like a dime, or a marble on the screen. She took measurements, making blips and clicks. We didn't speak. The technician brought the images to the doctor. Five minutes later the doctor walked in. "A routine cyst," he said. "Benign. See you next year."

It might have been otherwise.

I had a conversation with my mother about a year before her death about what to do with her diaries. She had a whole shelf full of them and didn't know if they were worth keeping or if she wanted them burned. I convinced her to save them and now I have the privilege of reading them before I pass them on to my siblings. Her 30 plus volumes now occupy an entire shelf of my bookshelf in my bedroom. I pulled out her prayer journal the other day and read the first entry from February 2008:

It came to me yesterday when Heart Nurse Mary Jane said, "You might feel a little bit light headed now. I'm going to stop your heart." And she did. And I felt light-headed. My heart's electrical system wasn't triggering any beats. The pacemaker-defibrillator was doing all the electrical work. Without it in my chest I would have died by now. As I drove along I began seeing the ordinary scenes of life—a snow-bank beginning to get dirty from the traffic, a stoplight working well, my hands on the steering wheel, cars moving along obeying the rules of the road—commonplace and wonderful, because I might not have been here to see them.

Open your eyes to the ordinary epiphanies, the ordinary blessings of life and give thanks for this day, this hour, this moment that you were blessed to witness and know. For you might not have been here to see them. It might have been otherwise.

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In my reading this week I found out that this Sunday, Transfiguration Sunday, is also known by another name--The Last Epiphany. We are concluding the season of Epiphany, so named because it began with Epiphany, January 6 and continues through to this Tuesday as Lent begins this coming Ash Wednesday. The Epiphany Season highlights and celebrates the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles, as represented by the Magi. It also has a missionary focus, encouraging us to continue revealing Jesus to those who need the good news of God's unconditional love. Today, Transfiguration is also the Last Epiphany of the season.

Ever had one of those moments you wish you could just freeze in time? It may be the first day you're on vacation and the sights and sounds are all brand new or the day that something momentous happens such as a wedding or a 90th birthday party. My favorite moments are on those days that you have no expectations for something extraordinary and you look up and you see it. It could be a moment when the sun peeks through the clouds or a friend unexpectedly turns up, or you simply look at a scene you have looked at a thousand times before and you're suddenly struck with gratitude for the beauty of the scene and the gift of being alive to see it.

Today's Bible story gives us such a moment in time: "Jesus' face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light." In my mind's eye, Jesus is elevated a few feet off the ground and the entire scene gives us a view of the glory of the Christ, a glimpse of eternity.

That glimpse is reinforced by the appearance of two figures thought to be long gone, though they were never observed to have died. Both Moses and Elijah, two figures whose passings were mysterious, were believed by many Jews to be God's precursors of the end times (the Jewish equivalent of the book of Revelation). Because Elijah was taken bodily into the heavens (2 Kings 2:11) and Moses' grave was never found (he was buried by God in Deuteronomy 34:6), these two men of faith were thought to be available for God to send back to inform humankind that God's reign was at hand. With the appearance of these two talking with Jesus, it is as if the mantle has been passed from them to Jesus, the only one remaining on earth who would be able to tell the people about the coming reign of God.

The story of transfiguration comes hard on the heels of Jesus telling his disciples that he must be rejected, killed and resurrected. This transfiguration event reassures those who witnessed it that their confidence in him is well placed, even if he is on the journey toward death and the cross. This event shines as a beacon of resurrection hope.

It is one thing for Jesus to tell his disciples that while following him will involve sacrifice and perhaps even death, it will also result in glory. It is another thing to actually *show* them that glory shining right before their eyes.

Since this story so emphasizes the dazzling glow of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, we also need to pay attention to glory, to remember the times when we've sensed the presence

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of the Holy in our own lives. Every once in a while something so touching, so incandescent, so alive, transfigures the world around us that it's almost beyond bearing.

Jane Kenyon has a wonderful poem called *Otherwise* that points us toward the luminescence of ordinary life and our resulting gratitude:

Otherwise by Jane Kenyon

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.

At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
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