

I speak to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The English Poet, Robert Browning once wrote, that “a man’s reach should always exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”

At the top of Mount Nebo, we are told that Moses stood glimpsing upon a more magnificent scene than his eyes may have laid upon before. Standing at the side of the LORD, and looking upon the land before him, Moses saw how great God’s creation truly was. In the distance before his eyes, lay a small corner of the kingdom; a land promised to his forefathers; a land carved out for them by God.

The LORD said to Moses, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

It was there that Moses died, his last glances on this earth staring longingly at the place where he spent so much of his life leading God’s people; he starred

out at the Promised Land, and in the land of Moab, we're told, he died at the LORD's command.

You would think Moses deserved better than that – after all they weren't so far away. You would think the LORD could have held out just a little longer, and let Moses lead his people the rest of the way. For unequalled he was, in signs and in wonders, leading the Israelites across the desert and out of Egypt. He made displays of power, and was known as a prophet unlike any who went before him – but in the end, the Promised Land, would be for Moses, but a glimpse.

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You may have noticed that since my arrival at Transfiguration, one year ago now, you have heard quite a lot about the "Kingdom of God" preached from this pulpit. You have heard stories of Jesus teaching his followers through parables about the Kingdom of God, and its likeness to a Mustard Seed, to a Sower, to a Landowner and to many other people, circumstances and things – and if I can be brutally honest with you this morning, sometimes

without a little help, I am not always sure exactly what he means.

But the Hebrew People of the Old Testament, believed it to be much simpler than that. They believed that the Promised Land was simply “a place” they had to get to; “a place” where milk and honey would flow; “a place” where oppression would be over, where their travels would be behind them; “a place” where God would be with them and never let them go.

But not unlike the Kingdom of God which Jesus continually speaks of in the gospel; the Promised Land of the Hebrew People was more than simply “a place” they were destined to go.

In fact, I would dare to say, that the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of, and the Promised Land to where Moses led God’s people, are not so different from one another, but might actually be but one in the same.

Scripture tells us that for decades Moses led God’s people through the heat and the sand of the desert –

for years he led them as they suffered and went hungry in the wilderness. Scripture tells us that when the Hebrew People arrived in this land that they had been promised, they would spend centuries in their land, frocked by violence and oppression, mirroring much of what they had already seen before.

And I think it is fair to ask the question, of whether this place they eventually came to that was fraught with so much resistance and struggle, was indeed the Kingdom Moses saw from the mountaintop – was this their Promised Land?

Or was their more in store from God, was there a land beyond even Moses measure. Was the glimpse from the mountaintop larger than a landscape in full view? Did Moses see a greater Kingdom, as he looked out upon God's creation?

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Throughout different times in our lives, God takes each of one of us to the mountaintop for a glimpse at something greater. Sometimes without even

knowing it we experience a place where God is taking us.

When a new baby is born and a mother looks deeply into the eyes of her child, the Promised Land is seen in full view. When a husband of sixty years marriage sits at the bedside of his dying wife, and they share in one last embrace, together they look out into the Kingdom of God. When a nurse in Africa feeds an HIV infected child that won't live out the month – through the love and comfort that is given to them, that child tastes the Promised Land.

In our broken world we don't live in the Promised Land or the Kingdom of God day by day, I don't think that any of us can argue with that, but by God's grace from time to time, he gifts us with a glimpses from the mountaintop. He points to the Kingdom that Christ proclaimed.

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In the 1960's, leaders such as John Kennedy, his brother Bobby, Martin Luther King, and Medger Evers, fought for the plight of civil rights not only for the

people of their generation, but for the generations that were destined to come. They believed in a vision for this world where people would not be judged by the color of their skin, or the makeup of the gender, but by the content of their character. They believed that this world was capable of giving birth to generations that would embrace a cultural mosaic of people, without pride or prejudice.

But in our broken world, one by one, these great leaders were murdered before their time – taken from us before their vision of hope had time to be realized.

In early April of 1968, the night before Dr. King was shot and killed, in Memphis Tennessee, the great preacher gave a speech to a packed auditorium of people. He stood at the podium that night, as he had so many nights before, to proclaim a message of God, in the face of threat and violence upon his life, and upon the lives of his loved ones.

Dr. King preached these words:

“Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop.

And I don't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And God has allowed me to go up to the mountaintop. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!

And so I'm happy, tonight.

I'm not worried about a thing.

I'm not fearing any man!

For mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!!”

Dr. King knew what Moses came to know. That one of God's greatest gifts to us is the gift of one another. That in Christ, none of us stands alone, because God has taken the many and has turned us into one! Dr. King knew what Moses came to know, that God would call others to lead his flock, God would not abandon his people, and God would call "Joshua's" to fulfill God's work.

As I turn on the TV and radio these days, and hear of leaders of different races, genders, and orientations, coming to the forefront of our churches, and our governments today, I can't help but think of Dr. King with a smile.

But I don't believe for a second that smile wouldn't be broken by a sermon back up at that podium in Tennessee. 'Oh no, we're not done yet,' I can just hear him say, 'don't confuse your mountaintop for the Kingdom itself. As long there are places in this world where the poor are hungry – we have work to do. As long as there are places in this world where violence overruns peace – we're not done yet. As long as there is suffering and injustice in this world that goes neglected – you and I must respond!'

For God finds the hungry and God gives them their fill. God finds the violated, and God wraps them in peace. God reaches out to the suffering, and God holds them in the palm of his hand.

For in the end, my brothers and sisters, it is not us who goes out and reaches the Promised Land, it is the Promised Land that reaches us. It is not us that enter the Kingdom of God; it is the Kingdom of God that enters us. For it is there, in the Promised Land, in the Kingdom of God, that our eyes will see the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.