

## March 6 | Matthew 17:1-4

### Read

*“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”*

### Reflect

In the previous chapter we see Jesus asking the disciples, **“Who do you say that I am?”** After some guessing, Peter is the only one to get the correct answer by saying, **“The Messiah of God.”** Jesus then predicts his own death. It is with this backdrop that we come upon these verses which begin **“Six days later.”** The transfiguration story here is also found in Mark and Luke as well.

A tradition in Judaism held that Moses and Elijah would return to earth before the “Day of the Lord.” Moses represented the Law, and Elijah the Prophets. The implication is that the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled in the person of Christ. All three accounts have Peter wanting to build tents (or dwellings) probably wanting to “live” in the mountaintop experience.

Can you blame Peter? It is human nature to want to stay in a “mountaintop moment” as long as possible. The second verse of Romans chapter 12 urges us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Prayer with God can be transforming. So can listening to others tell their stories of faith. During this Lenten season, we can look towards God’s transforming power by challenging ourselves to see the transformation in others.

### Recenter

*Return: This week, listen for Jesus. Find the time and place to give Jesus space to talk to you by turning off your electronics. Remove yourself from other distractions. Sit and be still. Listen. Think about the ways you are being transformed through your journey with Christ.*

*Pray: Loving God, you reveal yourself to us in different ways. For Peter, James, and John they got an eye-full of your glory on the mountain. Open our eyes so that we might see you. Open our ears so that we might hear you. Open our minds so that our lives might be transformed by your glory and grace. Help us see the ways you want us to be used to transform the lives of others.*

### Author Bio

Andrew Diehl is a FBC Member who is a preacher's kid and a former teacher of the Discovery Class.



## March 7 | Matthew 17:5-8

### Read

*“While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.”*

### Reflect

A few years ago I was hiking with my wife, Charla, in the Appalachian mountains in western North Carolina. We set out for one of the grassy, bald areas at the summit, where we could see 360 degree views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. But it was a cloudy, misty day on the hike up the mountain with limited visibility. When we finally reached the summit we noticed that the Appalachian Trail cut through the grassy area.

Just around that time, we noticed a hiker who was through-hiking the Appalachian Trail. As our paths crossed, the clouds parted, the sun shone, and revealed a great rainbow stretching across the sky. We were all astounded by this glorious sight and this hiker was crying tears of joy.

Through the clouds, clarity came.

Mountains are common places in scripture to experience God. Here in Matthew’s account of the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John accompany Jesus up the mountain and are amazed at what is taking place. Peter’s first impulse is to speak up and to make a plan. God has something else in mind, though. Things start to get cloudy on the mountain, but then things get suddenly clear: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

It is in listening that Peter and the disciples encounter God—not through speaking, explaining, or making plans. I wonder what is clouding your vision today. Plans? To-do lists? Rushing to appointments or meetings? Looking down at screens? In all our doing, we can miss out on hearing and seeing what God is saying.

### Recenter

*Clarify: Take a short walk outside today without your phone or earphones—clearing your mind. What sounds do you hear? What sights do you notice? What might God be saying to you today?*

### Author Bio

Kyle Caudle is the Associate Pastor for Youth, Missions, and Adults at First Baptist on Fifth. A firm believer that words create worlds, he loves the creative process of writing and songwriting.

## March 8 | Exodus 17:1-4

### Read

*“From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”*

### Reflect

If I were in charge of creating subtitles for biblical stories, I might call this one “A Leader’s Lament.” Anyone who’s been a leader for very long has experienced this significant downside of leadership. It sometimes feels like no good deed goes unpunished. In this particular case, Moses had been successful in freeing the Israelites after hundreds of years in captivity and slavery to the Egyptians. It nearly cost Moses his life to accomplish this and it was a long and arduous task to get there. Then, only a month or so into the Exodus, as they are making their way toward the promised land, there is a grass-roots movement to get rid of Moses whom they accused of trying to kill them in the wilderness! Who can blame Moses for crying out to God, “What shall I do for this people?”

The Israelites, like us, failed to perceive what should have been obvious to them. In the words of Michael J. Chan of Concordia College, Israel had failed to learn a crucial lesson: “Where God leads, God provides.” Just prior to this, God had given them victory over the Egyptians, enriched Israel with the wealth of their former captors, made a way through the Sea of Reeds (very dramatically!), and provided all the supplies they needed on their journey through the desert. And still, when a new challenge arose, they lost faith and resorted to blaming their leader, Moses.

Are we really any different? Has God not already protected us from our enemies, enriched us with a capacity to meet our economic needs, made a way for us through difficult circumstances, and given all we need to sustain our lives to this very day? Let us then learn what Israel did not: Where God leads, God provides. That’s not to say it will be easy, or smooth, or without life-altering challenges. Yet still, when we listen and follow, God still provides a way. And that is a truth that can sustain us, come what may.

### Recenter

Reframe: *Where is God leading you right now? What way is God providing? Take a moment to look within or around. What signs of God’s provision do you see?*

### Author Bio

Chris Gambill is the AVP for FaithHealth at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, husband to Joy, and a member of the Conversations Class.

## March 9 | Exodus 17:5-7

### Read

*“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.’ Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”*

### Reflect

Society teaches us, from the day we are born, to get an education, get a good job or career, get married, buy a house and a car, and have children, so the cycle begins again to raise another productive member of society. We learn to have faith in our abilities, our intellect, and ourselves. But, when we do so, is the Lord among us or not?

We have faith that our hard work will pay off. We have faith in the system that cuts our checks, in the bank, and in the fact that our direct deposit will be processed and the funds will be readily available. But do we have faith in the Lord? What happens if we suddenly lose our job, the direct deposit isn't deposited, funds aren't available, we struggle to pay the mortgage, the car payment, the light bill, and put food on the table, and, as a result, are no longer acknowledged as a contributing member of society? We despair and wonder, Lord, are you among us or not?

When the Lord told Moses to go ahead of the people, Moses did not question it. Moses knew the power of God. Moses, who had a speech impediment and a disability, already knew that the Lord was among us. That the Lord provides for us, gives us what we need to carry out his will. Moses did not put his faith in his abilities or intellect; he humbly recognized his limitations, and God provided him with the support he needed through his brother Aaron, as his interpreter, so that he could reach his full potential and fulfill his divine purpose.

To have faith is to take a deep breath, breathe in, and know the air will be there. To have faith is to know that God is and will be there with you and for you.

### Recenter

*Pray: God, thank you for loving us more than we love ourselves, for knowing our needs, and for always standing there in front of us on our rock at Horeb, waiting.*

### Author Bio

Marion Thomas is a Doctor of Ministry student at Wake Forest University. She is grateful that God gifted her with her partner, Robert, their mother, Tracy, and their 10-month-old Maine Coon cat, Link.

## March 10 | Psalm 95:6-9

### Read

*“O come, let us worship and bow down;  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture  
and the sheep of his hand.  
O that today you would listen to his voice!  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
when your ancestors tested me  
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.”*

### Reflect

In this Scripture, the readers are instructed to worship God. True worship involves our whole being, including heart, mind, soul, and body. We can trust that God knows our inner thoughts and knows when our worship is genuine, a part of us, and from the heart.

With all the noise in the world, how do we get away to worship God in our daily activities? We hear noise every day, some is praiseworthy and some is not.

When I lived in Mozambique, one of the activities which I did regularly was to travel outside of the city into the countryside. In the countryside, there was not the noise of the world. It was only the noise of peace and quiet. It was a wide open expanse without buildings and beautiful views of the sky. At times like that, it is easy to look at the surroundings and offer worship to God. It was easier to get away from the noise.

Our society is a busy one filled with noise and it can be challenging to find times of peace. How do we incorporate worship into our daily activities? How can we take the tasks we do regularly and make them a time of worship to our God?

### Recenter

*Abide: May our hearts be softened and open to the Lord of Creation. May we take time to recenter ourselves when we find ourselves going to Meribah. May we strive to live a life of worship in our hearts, minds, and daily lives.*

### Author Bio

Carol Wilkinson lives in Winston Salem. She began attending First on Fifth after watching the services through the television ministry.

## March 11 | Romans 5:1-5

### Read

*“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*

### Reflect

At age 34 I found myself running my first 10K race. By mile five, I was in real pain. My legs ached, my lungs burned, and I was wondering why I ever thought this was a good idea. Just then, I noticed my children standing beside the racecourse up ahead yelling “Go Daddy!” Suddenly I experienced a sudden burst of energy, and I was filled with joy and a confident hope that I could finish the race well.

A road race can be grueling and painful, and in many ways, life is much the same. Suffering and pain, seem to find each of us. Most of the suffering we experience, however, doesn’t come because we willingly signed up for it, as I did for that race. It comes simply because we live in a world where pain and hardship exist. We can become bitter and cynical, or we can remain open to the possibility that positive results will show up - that God can bring good, even out of the most horrible situations.

If you are suffering today, perhaps feeling helpless or hopeless, and celebrating is the last thing on your mind, this passage may be the good news you have been needing to hear... A reminder that suffering can produce perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. A comforting reassurance that all the pain and agony will not be wasted.

If these are dark times for you—as they are for many in our country and around the world—remember this: you are not alone. *“God’s love is poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit.”* Just like my children standing by the racecourse, there is a great cloud of witnesses cheering you on and reminding you of two things: you are deeply loved and you are never abandoned!

### Recenter

Listen: *Set aside 5 minutes to listen to this musical message of hope, [You Do Not Walk Alone](#).*

Pray: *Loving God, in difficult, even harrowing times, grant us comfort and assurance that you are always with us. Amen.*

### Author Bio

Cyrus Bush is a Mentor/Coach and a former Hospital Chaplain and Church Choir Director. Cyrus sings in the choir at First on Fifth.

## March 12 | Romans 5:6-8

### Read

*“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”*

### Reflect

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. What a powerful statement! Even knowing all the bad things that someone would do, that the entire world would do, Christ died for each one of us. It seems so unfathomable to me. I would inconvenience myself for almost anyone. I would suffer something that causes me pain for far fewer people. I can think of only a few people that I would die for. You probably, and correctly, guess that these select people are my children.

I love my children fiercely and I imagine that what I feel for them is only some small portion of the love that God has for each one of us. To make the verse even more unfathomable to me, God sent God’s child, Jesus, to die for us. I can’t imagine sending any of my children to die in someone else’s stead. Yet Jesus came to earth and chose to die for each one of us. Each of us, a beloved child of God.

As God’s people and receivers of God’s abundant love, we must strive to convey God’s love to everyone, not from duty or force, but from the well of living water that flows eternally from within us.

Must we show love to everyone we ask?

The person we find annoying, that tests our patience with every interaction?

The politician who angers us in public discourse?

The person who has no place to call home that finds a safe place to rest, a sanctuary, outside of our sanctuary?

Yes to all, as Jesus died for all.

### Recenter

*Pray: Lord, show us how to show your love to all people. Grant us the patience, wisdom, and humility to see each person through your eyes. Teach us to love with your everlasting, unfailing, all-consuming love.*

### Author Bio

Meredith Parker is wife to Robert and mother to Kara, Kate, and Karly.