

“Tagged or Touched?”—Luke 9:28-36

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

I sometimes think it would have been great to have been up on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter and James and John and, of course, Jesus. I sometimes wish I had had the opportunity just to go to that site. When I was in Israel back in the early 90s, our tour guide pointed to a mountain and said, “That’s the Mount of Transfiguration.” We said, “Let’s go there,” and our guide said, “We can’t. It’s over in Jordan, and the Jordanians won’t let us go there. Besides, there’s only a monastery up there, and it’s really, really tough to get to it.” So I didn’t get to go to the Mount of Transfiguration.

But, whenever I think about it, I realize that I don’t have to go to the Mount of Transfiguration. Why? Because, even before I went to the Holy Land, my life had been touched by the glory of the Lord.

I was touched by the glory of the Lord this past week when someone sent me an idea about something that I thought was good. Then, a few hours later, someone else sent me the same idea. I said, “This has got to be the Holy Spirit at work!” That, to me, was the glory of the Lord, and I was touched by it.

I am touched by the glory of God when the Body of Christ, the Church of the Lord Jesus, comes together for worship. As I watched the worship services of the first day of this called General Conference, I was touched by the fact that, despite cultural differences and widely divergent opinions, the representatives of the People Called United Methodist meeting in St. Louis were worshipping God together.

And I am always touched by the glory of the Lord when we who gather here at Bainbridge First United Methodist Church put aside all the other things we could

be doing so that we can come together for what we should be doing on the Lord's Day—that is, giving thanks to God our Father through the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit for the free, undeserved, unearned gift of the Father's love. Every Sunday is a special Sunday for me, but on those occasions when every element of worship clicks and it all flows together into an harmonious whole, it's the glory of the Lord, and I am touched by it.

And I am touched by the glory of the Lord every time we as a community of faith come together around the Lord's Table. Now, you all know that I'm enthusiastic about Holy Communion (and that may be an understatement!). I love the Lord's Supper, because, to me, at least, this is not some ritual we do every Sunday; this is not some so-called "tradition" that we do because we've always done it. To me, at least, this is God's doing—God giving me, God giving *us*, the chance to experience once again in a fresh and new way the breaking of Jesus' Body and the shedding of his Blood to buy the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of a new life with God in the here-and-now as well as in the hereafter. To me, this is the glory of God, and I am touched by it.

Touched, mind you, not tagged. When the children play tag, whoever is tagged is "It." But whoever is "It" isn't "It" forever—he or she can tag someone else, and then that one becomes "It." Tags are not permanent—they make no lasting change. Indeed, tags are meant to be removed!

But a touch is something else. Think of the people who have touched you, the people who have touched your life. Think of how your life has changed—think of how your life is different—because someone touched your life. I've mentioned from time to time those who have made a difference in my life. Their influence—their touch—has changed me, and for the better. I am a different person because these people touched my life.

But, more importantly, I am a totally different person—a new person—because I have been and continue to be touched by the glory of the Lord. Because the love and mercy and grace of Jesus have come into my heart and life, I am no longer what I once was—which wasn't bad, but it wasn't all God wanted me to be. But because I have been touched, not tagged, by the glory of the Lord, I can serve in his name, I can share his glory with others, and I can grow into the person God has always wanted me to be.

Touched, mind you, not tagged, by the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What about you? Have you been touched or tagged by the glory of the Lord? Has the love of God for each of us in Jesus made a permanent difference in your life? Or has it made no difference at all? Let the glory of the Lord touch you. Let the love of God in Christ make a change in you. Let God's mercy and grace make a difference in your life. Allow yourself this morning to be touched, not tagged, by the glory of the Lord.

But, when you've been touched by the glory and love of the Lord, don't forget that Jesus calls us to touch others with his love and glory! We could, like Peter, want to stay on the mountaintop, just basking in the glory of experiencing God's love made real in Jesus—but Jesus knew, and the disciples quickly learned, that the love of God isn't meant to be hoarded and kept like some great secret treasure: it's meant to be shared with all the lost and broken and hurting people in our lost and broken and hurting world.

Some of us may be content simply to be “tagged” with God's love—to have that fleeting experience, that momentary warmth, of God's love in our hearts and lives. But, like being “It” in the children's game, it's here and then it's gone. We want—no, we *need*—to be *touched* by God's love made real in Jesus, to be filled so constantly that our lives are truly changed for the better as we are continuously being transformed more and more into the image of Jesus. But we won't be content there—we'll want to touch others with the love of God, so that they, too, will know what we know—the saving, renewing, transforming peace and joy of belonging to Jesus.

Tagged, or touched? You decide.