



The Last Sunday after Epiphany
The Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 10, 2018

"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" [Mark 9.7]

The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken. [Psalm 50.1]

In August 1487, Bartholomew Diaz left Lisbon, Portugal, with two caravels and a storeship. He was appointed by King John II to find a route around Africa that would lead to the riches of India. Diaz sailed straight from Cape Palmas to the mouth of the Congo, then kept close to the shoreline until he was off the Namibian coast. About New Year's Day 1488, a gale hit his ships and blew them southward, past the southernmost tip of land. For thirteen days, terror and panic gripped the hearts of the men. On February 3, Diaz bravely pointed his Caravels toward the north and he began to notice the shore was oriented toward the northeast. He realized he had found the route around Africa. After stopping for supplies, he turned around and made the journey home. When he arrived in Portugal in May 1488, Diaz showed the king his chart. He called the southern tip of Africa the "Cape of Storms" because of the violent weather they had encountered. But King John had the name changed to the "Cape of Good Hope" because he knew that even though the waters were very dangerous there, they also brought a promise of great wealth.

The eye of the storm is the place of hope: This is the lesson of what we call the Transfiguration Story that we will hear on Sunday. We hear this story every year on the Sunday before Lent. Jesus brings Peter, James, and John to a mountaintop where they see him with Elijah and Moses, revealed in his full glory. Christ's full identity is revealed to them: He is a man of prayer; he is delivering the New Covenant, just as Moses delivered the Law; he is fulfilling a prophecy – as did Elijah. He is the Chosen One, the Messiah.

On this mountain Peter, James, and John learn that discipleship means navigating the storm by *listening*:

Not being *right*

Not being members of an elite group who are protected from every storm.

Not understanding what we hear or see . . .

It means *listening*

I think most of us would love to walk down from a mountain with our faces shining, like Moses and Jesus, because we have "talked with God." We want to come down from the mountain to a throne, not a cross. We want to be like Jesus the wonder-worker, not like Jesus crucified. And we have so many preconceptions about what God will say that we either give up listening or we drown out God's voice with our own words. We pride ourselves on our ability to avoid storms. But in order to experience the peace that is in the eye of the storm we must enter the storm itself. We will reach and recognize the place of "Good Hope" only after we have passed through the place of "Storms."