

Transfigured

*Matthew 17:1-13; Mark
9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36 24:36-
39; John 20:19-23*

*Lent 2, Transfiguration
Sunday, Pentacost Year A
(Revised Common)*

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1
●	Phillip - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence	●
▲	James - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	▲
▲	Andrew - the younger brother of Peter, one of the youngest disciples	▲
▲	Matthew - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples	▲
■	John - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	■
●	Jesus	●

Scene 1

Andrew , James , Jesus , John , Matthew , Phillip

{Some of the disciples are still in hiding following the crucifixion of Jesus, unsure what to make of the reports of his resurrection. Suddenly, there's a knock on the door.}

Phillip *[fearfully]* What's that!

James *[in a panic]* It's the Romans! They've found us!

Andrew What do we do?

Matthew *[shakily]* Open it. This the hour. We're in God's hands.

Phillip *[to Matthew]* Are you crazy?

James *[firmly]* He's right. The swords! Where are the swords?

John *[knocking again]* James! Peter! It's me!

Andrew *[with relief]* Oh my God!

James *[letting John in]* Get in, quick!

John *[excitedly]* James! I heard someone saw him! He really has come back!

Matthew Glory be to God!

Phillip We're saved!

James *[grimly]* Wait a minute, wait a minute! *[to John]* Who saw him?

John *[excitedly]* Cleophas and Nathanael! On the road - *[anxiously after noticing their disappointed expressions]* What? What's wrong?

James *[grimly]* Cleophas and Nathanael did claim they met him on the road.

John Then it's certain. He's returned! Where's Peter? He's got to hear this!

James John, you've got to get a grip on yourself! It is far from certain.

John James, I know he has risen. Peter and I saw the empty tomb. The women met the angel. And now Cleophas and Nathanael have met the rabbi himself!

Matthew *[gently]* John, did they tell you the whole story?

John No, I haven't been able to track them down. I just heard about it.

Phillip *[grimly]* You better sit down.

John But the rabbi's alive again! He's out there somewhere. Has Peter returned? We've got to tell him about this!

Andrew There's been no sign of him.

Matthew John, do you think we should go after him? We were afraid to at first, but it might be riskier to leave him on his own out there.

John Riskier? What risk?

James *[impatiently]* The Romans! They got the rabbi, and now they might be after us. In his state, Peter could bumble right into them, or worse, lead them here!

John But James, the Romans didn't get the rabbi!

James *[frustrated]* John, you've got to let it go! Listen: Cleophas and Nathanael do think they saw the rabbi, but here's the thing: they didn't even recognize him at first! They walked along the road with some stranger for miles, telling him about the rabbi's death, and then suddenly, at the end of the day, they "recognized" him as the rabbi.

John *[deflated]* What?

Matthew It was obviously some kind of delusion, brought about by grief. Or maybe the man was a con artist, and after hearing all about how their rabbi had died, tried milking them for what he could get. Believe me, I've seen it. These people can make you think they're mind readers. By the end of the day, after all that talk about the rabbi, he'd learned enough about the rabbi and gotten a good enough read on those two that he decided to give them a try.

John *[grasping for straws]* But...what about the empty tomb? Peter and I both saw it with our own eyes.

James And that's all you saw. You didn't see *him*, did you?

John What about the angel, then? The angel said the rabbi was arisen.

James According to the women.

John James, just because they were women -

Andrew But it's not just that. They were really attached to the rabbi, maybe more than any of us. His mother was in that group, right? Maybe they wanted to see him again so badly, they imagined it.

Matthew Or maybe it was a groundskeeper. In fact, maybe he was even trying to explain where they moved the body, and they misunderstood him!

Phillip And don't forget: all that Mary Magdalene said was that the tomb was empty. And she was there right along with the rest of them.

James If only one of us had been there!

{A heavy pause.}

John *[wearily]* Maybe you're right. *[after another weary pause]* How did Cleophas and Nathanael explain not recognizing the man at first?

Andrew They said he looked like himself - and didn't look like himself - both at the same time.

John *[murmuring to himself, suddenly excited again]* Oh my God, that's exactly how it was!

James *[not hearing John]* So you see how crazy their story is. The man didn't look like rabbi because he *wasn't*. And he did look like the rabbi because they wanted him to.

John *[excitedly]* No! James, this is it! This is the final proof! He both looked like himself, and didn't. Don't you remember?

James Remember what?

John That day he took us up the mountain. The day he...*changed*.

Phillip What day? What mountain?

John He only took James, Peter, and me. He sent the rest of you into the town to work out lodging.

Andrew I remember that. When you guys got back, you all seemed to be in shock or something. No one would talk, and you all went straight to bed. I thought maybe you'd been mugged on the road, or witnessed a murder or something like that.

Matthew What happened up there? What do you mean, "he changed"?

John We climbed that mountain, and all the way up, the rabbi didn't say a word. He seemed...not frightened or in pain, but...

James *[remembering]* Tense. Like he was bracing himself for something.

John Yeah. Yeah, that was it. So we were already getting more and more nervous, wondering what was up. Well, we got to the top and...I don't know what else to say. He changed. Right before our eyes.

Phillip Okay, that's what you've been saying all along, but what does it mean? What happened?

James It was like light began shining out from his body. Or like it was turning into light. It was dazzling. I was blinded by it.

John Really? I don't remember any light, but certainly his robes became very, very white. Almost whiter than it seemed possible for anything to be, as if some new color had been invented. And that's when he changed. His appearance, his face, it somehow changed. He no longer looked like himself, and yet he did. It was terrifying.

Andrew It doesn't seem so frightening to me. In fact, it seems like a sight you wouldn't want to miss.

James You had to be there.

Matthew John, can you describe why you were terrified? Was his new appearance threatening? Was there an earthquake, or lightning, or roaring winds?

John No, no, none of that. The best I can do is to say I felt terrified that I would be left out. Two other figures appeared, and they began to talk amongst themselves, and I suddenly felt completely ignored, rejected, on the wrong side of a shut, locked door. I was suddenly gripped by a fear that I would be trapped there forever: unloved, unnoticed, *unknown*. It was horrible.

James I felt the opposite. I didn't *want* them to notice me! To me, it was like the rabbi grew in size somehow, like he was suddenly a giant - like all three of them were - and I was a bug on the floor, and all they'd have to do is take one incautious step and I'd be squashed. I wanted to dig a hole and hide in it!

Phillip Was Peter affected the same way?

James Of course! *[to Andrew]* You think your brother's so tough, but you should have been there that day! He was shaking like a leaf.

John I have to admit, though, that he was braver than we were. He actually walked up to the rabbi and the other two and spoke with them.

Matthew What did he say?

John He asked if we could build some huts for them to stay in.

Phillip Wow. Leave it to Peter to figure out something you could do for them! And what did they say?

James Nothing. Or nothing we could hear, anyway. But I think they must have disapproved of the idea, because he backed away from them - almost fell away - like he'd gotten smacked in the face.

John But that was also when the Voice came. A Voice sounded from nowhere. Or everywhere, I don't know. It said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him!"

Andrew And what did he say?

John He told us - in his normal everyday voice - not to be afraid, and to get up, and when we looked up, he was himself again, and the other two were gone, and it was just us on the mountaintop.

Matthew That's an amazing story, but why did you say it was the final proof that the rabbi is alive again?

John Because of what Cleophas said about not recognizing him at first. *[to James]* If the rabbi had appeared to us randomly on some road, changed in the way he changed on the mountain but without the frightening aspect, would you recognize him right off?

James No. To tell you the truth, my first thought on the mountain was that an angel had descended and whisked him away somewhere.

John But then, if you later figured out it was really him, wouldn't you say to yourself, "Of course! Why didn't I realize it before? This *is* him. He looks like himself, and yet unlike himself -

James At the same time. *[thinking it over]* Okay, I might. I can see that.

Phillip What I don't see is why you never told us about this.

James The rabbi said to never tell anyone else about it.

Matthew But you just did. John, if you really believe he's risen, aren't you worried about disobeying his command?

John *[triumphantly]* No! Because that wasn't his exact command. Don't you remember, James? He didn't say to *never* tell. He said to never tell *until* -

James *[with a gasp, remembering triumphantly]* Until the Son of Man has risen from the dead!

{Jesus enters.}

Jesus Peace be with you!

{Everybody cries out in fear and dismay. e.g. "Help!" "Ahhhh!" "Oh my God!", etc.}

James *[aggressively]* Who are you? How did you get in here?

Jesus Don't you recognize me, James? You've seen me this way before.

John Rabbi, it's you! I can't believe I didn't recognize you *again*, that I was afraid of you again.

Matthew Dear God, it's him! It's true.

Phillip Nathanael was right!

Andrew *[fearfully]* You're not...you're not a ghost, are you?

Jesus *[with a laugh]* Hardly! This is me. This is my body. Come, take my hand! Feel that I'm alive.

{There is a rumbling sound.}

John *[scandalized]* Rabbi? Did your stomach just growl?

Jesus *[exuberantly]* It did indeed! Would a ghost's stomach growl? *[quietly and enigmatically]* I haven't eaten in three days, you know.

John *[solemnly]* We know.

Phillip We were just sitting to a meal. I'll fix you a plate!

Andrew Rabbi? Peter's missing. We don't know if we should search for him or -

Jesus *[interrupting]* Peter is fine.

Matthew Did you find him? Did you talk to him?

Jesus *He found me. [a pause]* And now it's time for me to send you forth as I sent him. *[approaching each of the men and breathing on them]* John, receive the Holy Spirit.

John Amen.

Jesus Matthew, receive the Holy Spirit.

Matthew Amen.

Jesus Andrew, receive the Holy Spirit.

Andrew Amen.

Jesus Phillip, receive the Holy Spirit.

Phillip Amen.

Jesus James -

James *[blurting it out]* Rabbi! I'm sorry I didn't recognize you!

Jesus *[after a pause]* James, receive the Holy Spirit. *[to all]* If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. Forgive one another, and forgive yourselves.

everybody Amen!

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
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