March 12

God Is Overwhelming
Mark 9:2-6

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. (Mark 9:2-6)

Have you had something happen that completely throws you off? For a moment, your mind goes blank, and you don’t know how to deal with new information. It happens to all of us.

What we often do is revert back to what we know. Maybe we stick to our original plan, even if we know it’s not the best plan. Maybe we retreat into the practices that have kept us safe in the past.

That’s what is happening with Peter here. He is witnessing something indescribable. Jesus, the rabbi they have followed, looks different. Ancient biblical figures are suddenly present, and they are speaking casually with their beloved rabbi. It makes no sense, and yet it’s happening.

While trying to process the information, Peter wants to be helpful. He wants to do more than gawk and lose control of the situation around him. By putting his hands to work, he can still function in a situation that is absolutely terrifying and nonfunctional.

We might say to ourselves that we would react differently, but I sincerely doubt it. If we got just a glimpse of the glory of God, we would be overwhelmed. If we suddenly saw the biblical characters we’ve read about for so long, we’d be at a loss for words. And when we don’t know what to do, we want to revert to our “normal life.”
But God is not normal. God is extraordinary. God is glorious, and is going to overwhelm us . . . and for that, we can say, “Thanks be to God.”

Overwhelming God, we cannot fathom the expanse of your glory. When we overlook it for our mundane lives, forgive us. When we suggest that we go back to the way things were, correct us. When we don’t know what to do or say, love us as patiently as you always have. Amen.