

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Transfiguration of Our Lord – February 15, 2026

“Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.”

- Exodus 34:17 –

Imagine what it must have been like at the foot of the mountain when Moses went to talk with God. The Hebrews did not know the God of their forefathers very well after four hundred years in Egypt. They saw divine reward in every good thing and divine wrath in every natural occurrence. It must have been frightening to see the fiery cloud descend down the mountain as Moses was climbing up. Was it a bad sign? Was Moses going to be safe? What did the fire mean? Would this God really save them?

In a very different time and place, on August 23rd, 79 AD, the Roman people celebrated Volcanalia, a festival honoring the Roman god Volcanus. The festival was meant to placate the god so that the people would be blessed by him. The people began August 24th with a sense of assurance because they had just offered sacrifices to Volcanus. But it was on this particular day in history that day Mt. Vesuvius erupted. The Roman city of Pompeii was buried under ash in a matter of hours, trapping the people and their environment in that moment for eternity.

Luther tells us in the Catechism that we should “fear and love and trust God above all things.” It doesn’t take long for us to turn away from the one true God. Sometimes it is fear itself that works against love and trust.

Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. “How could Moses survive in that fiery cloud?” the people asked. So they sought comfort from the gods they knew. The people forgot the God who led them out of Egypt, and by the time Moses returned they were worshipping an idol of gold. It was then they discovered what true fear meant!

When it comes to our trust in God, the tension between fear and love cannot be done away with by us; it is resolved only in Christ. Just as on the day of Transfiguration, there are times in our lives when the terrible cloud will descend on us. But we have the promise: Christ himself is with us. The One who reveals himself in frightening glory is the same One who has called us by name in love. He walks with us on the brightest mountaintop as well as in the darkest valley.