

Peter, James and John are given a rare vision of the majestic glory of God, a mountain top experience, but the euphoria of this experience neither enlightens their minds nor warms their hearts. They fail to be transfigured.

This section of Matthew's Gospel ends with the mother of James and John begging Jesus to install her two sons in places of honor in his "kingdom." The other disciples are outraged by the inner circle's trading upon privileged access because they too wanted these posts. They all wanted to be in charge, to sit on seats of privilege and power.

It is not only pharaohs who build pyramids. All nations do it. Corporations do it. Churches and schools organize hierarchies, and families and clans do it. It all seems so natural. It happens so regularly, so easily, so universally, that we find ourselves thinking, "Of course the few were born to give orders, and the many were made to obey."

Of all the cleverly devised myths we live by, this one, over time and with our acquiescence, has assumed the appearance of inevitability. Our vast, intricate systems of domination, so powerful among us to this day, have come down to us not from God but from social and political arrangements of the third millennium before Christ.

The practice of Jesus in his ministry and the death of Jesus upon a cross have always struck a minority of Christians in every age as the most powerful evidence that God intends Christian communities to be fellowships of agape and not little pyramids of the domineering and the dominated.

Jesus orders the boys not to tell any one of their mountain top vision until after the resurrection. The transfiguration can be understood and proclaimed only on the basis of Easter. Easter includes the way of the cross. The majestic glory of God is revealed in the resurrection only after it is manifested in the suffering love of the Son of Man.

Barbara Thompson started out as a freelance writer. For years she would write articles or books for people or businesses about subjects they prescribed. She would go through her days writing well, being a good citizen and friend, living a fairly useful and responsible life. Every once in a while she would get this funny feeling: I think my life is smaller than I am.

She became hooked on a story about what happens to children in war. When the nations are in an uproar brutality ensues, the children suffer, families are displaced. The story would not go away; it kept her up at night. Why is the world like this?

She went to Bosnia while the war was still raging to hear the children's stories. She returned home to interview Bosnian refugee children and teenagers for a national magazine article. She was working on a tight deadline and had given her number to the

children and youth she had interviewed in case they thought of anything else they wanted to tell her.

She was writing when the phone rang. A young girl, troubled voice, wrestling with unfamiliar English words, asked “Could you come and meet my family?” At first she protested, “I am very, very busy writing this story about your experience.” There was a pause, an intense quietness.

Barbara made her way to the dark little apartment, which some understaffed refugee resettlement organization had found for the family and then left them there: little food, one light, no table, no chairs, no bed, no extra clothes, the adults with no English. A grandma, a mom and a dad, and their little girl and two teens, all of them sitting on the bare floor.

The writer sat on the floor with the family. She saw whatever it is we see in people that makes them real, and deep, and beautiful, and worth troubling over. She made calls and gifts came from friends and her church, gifts of furniture and food, and the friendship of strangers. Later, out of this encounter, she founded the International Community School for refugee children in Decatur, Georgia.

In a God-given moment you did not expect and could not have planned, you find yourself following the glimmering of some holy light to a glorious place you never knew, a place where the majestic glory of God dwells.

If we only see God’s glory in the face of the Son of God and not in the face of the Son of Man—in the faces of the children of Syria and Turkey and Somalia and Ukraine, in the faces of the children of Sandy Hook and Parkland and Uvalde and Lansing, we will remain unchanged and our lives will remain smaller than we are.

We are not transfigured by euphoria. We are transfigured by the glimmering of some holy light flooding a crevice chiseled into our minds, into our hearts, into our souls, by the suffering of our children, revealing the majestic glory of God in their terrified and grief stricken faces.

To believe it is inevitable that our children will be gunned down at school is not the cost of freedom but another cleverly designed myth we *choose* to live by.