Today on this Transfiguration Sunday I am reminded of the fact that God singles out Jesus Christ both on this day and previously at his baptism and calls him My beloved son. Not knowing what this really meant the disciples try to equate Jesus with two other great figures in the bible. They want to bring Jesus down to a human level and relate to him more as a peer than his true status as Son of God the revelation of God….God herself. Moses and Elijah are of course two men who followed God, wrestled with God throughout their lives and lived to the best of their ability as disciples of God. Commentators have said that Moses represents the law to the disciples and Elijah the prophetic tradition. Then there is Jesus, perhaps the disciples see themselves on one of the three dwellings as well. But that takes away the truth that we are just humans doing our best to follow God. As we approach Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent I think it’s important to remember this fact. When we start to idolize ourselves or other human beings we forget the fact that we are all created in God’s image; no person above the other in the eyes of God. I bring this up as we watch a second impeachment trial for former president Donald Trump. A man who was so idolized that he was able to convince, thousands of people to storm the Capital, the symbol of democracy and freedom and terrorize all those inside who were trying to carry out the last step of a fair election. I bring this up as a reminder that while yes we can seek to emulate those that are admirable and doing God’s work in this world we have to be careful and discern who we chose to follow. That does not negate are responsibility and love of our neighbor which leads to being present to those who need us. Elisha picks his spiritual guide and mentor Elijah, as a person he will follow anywhere even to his death. He actually refuses to be anywhere else but by his side. There is nothing that can distract him from his desire to be by his mentor’s side until Elijah is literally taken away by God. Elisha doesn’t want Elijah’s death to be in vain though, he wants to take on the mantel of his spiritual guru and he even asks for a double share! This is not for Elijah to decide but as it turns out, God does grant this to Elisha. He is allowed to see his master ascend to God and one can hear the awe in his voice as he is separated from him by a chariot of fire and horses of fire. He is allowed to see him ascend into a whirlwind into heaven. What a gift when you consider the normal ways in which we bury our dead. We know by faith and belief that our loved ones are with God but Elisha saw it transpire. The fact that he is left grieving but with work to do to carry on Elijah’s work as a prophet and spiritual guru sounds familiar. While it is highly unlikely that we will see God whisk anyone away in a whirlwind we must trust that the work of God in this world is carried out from generation to generation by those who choose to carry the mantel of those who have gone before us. We are called to do more than trust that this will happen we are called to do our part with whatever gifts and talents and circumstances life places before us to show others the light of Christ. We must do our part to be present to those that are going through life changing circumstances as witnesses and bearers of their flame.

I was once again taken today by a story I heard on NPR this past week. I think you all can see my bias for news sources from my sermons. The story I heard was about a young black golfer named Kamaiu Johnson age 27. Kamaiu was 13 years old when met Jan Auger when she spotted him as she golfed in Tallahassee. Auger, is an assistant golf professional at the club there. The golf course was beside the apartment building where Kamaiu lived in a 2 bedroom with sometimes as many as 10 other people. Jan spotted him swinging a stick in imitation of the golfers’ swings. Something made her call him over. For one thing, he had a very fluid swing which he’d picked up from playing baseball. She asked him why he wasn’t in school that day and he lied and said he was homeschooled but he’d really already dropped out. The truth was “He wasn't a good student. He didn't test well and was put in "exceptionally slow learning" classes, separated from friends. He got picked on a lot. He was depressed and had no privacy in his home. He slept under a table with a long tablecloth over it. When Jan saw him that day there was not a lot of hopefulness in him and quite a lot of sadness. She invited him to try hitting a bucket of balls. The story proceeds like this: "I held the club in my hand and tried to figure out the best way to grip it, to swing it," he wrote. "I won't lie to you, I wasn't quite a natural. It was a bit rough at first. But, man, that first day I flushed one. Just totally pure. I watched the ball float up past the trees, into the sun and back down to earth. It was perfect. And I was hooked."

After that, an offer from Auger. If he did chores around the course, he could hit range balls for free and play for $1 a round.

Johnson eagerly said, "deal."

"It was like, all of a sudden I had purpose," he said. "Y'know all of a sudden I wanted to be as good at golf as I could be."

He is playing in his first professional PGA golf tournament as I write this. Who knows if he will be a star but 14 years ago Jan Auger gave this young man a purpose by inviting him into her world and giving him something to work towards. He earned a GED and Johnson also got a big boost from the [APGA Tour](https://www.apgatour.org/).

The Advocates Pro Golf Association Tour was created in 2010 "to prepare African Americans and other minority golfers to compete and win at the highest level of professional golf." Black collegiate golfers were found to have inferior equipment, training and coaching. Assistance was needed and the APGA stepped up to help these players out. You know life can be miraculous like that. The chances of Johnson ever even playing golf at the age of 13, when his family didn’t have money for adequate housing are miniscule. The meeting of Auger and Johnson was transformative and literally transfigured this young man from hopelessness to purpose. That is the message of the transfiguration to some degree. The message that we must always have hope and we do have purpose. That can be simply living life and following God. But it can also be living our lives aware of the power of God working through us to make us aware that all of us have purpose and deserve a chance to find our purpose.