

## **Microbursts of Hope**

Sermon by Rev. Susan Sparks

This powerful message challenges us to resist the world's negativity bias and instead seek out what's called 'microbursts of hope' in our daily lives. Drawing from the Transfiguration story in Matthew's Gospel, we're reminded that just as the disciples needed a transformative vision to sustain them through their journey to Jerusalem and the cross, we too need glimpses of divine light to carry us through uncertain times. The sermon brilliantly contrasts media sensationalism with spiritual resilience, using the example of Olympic figure skater Ilya Malinin's determined finish despite falls to illustrate how the world focuses on disaster rather than perseverance. The Transfiguration becomes our model: God provided the disciples with a mountaintop experience not as an escape, but as an anchor for the difficult road ahead. As we approach Lent, we're invited not to give something up, but to rise up by actively seeking and sharing small moments of hope, beauty, and justice in our world. These microbursts—whether a blooming flower, an act of solidarity, or a moment of inclusive celebration—remind us that the story isn't over and that divine light still breaks through ordinary moments, reframing what's possible when fear threatens to shrink our vision.

### **To think about...**

1. How does the media's negativity bias shape your own perception of the world, and what spiritual practices might help you resist this tendency?
2. In what ways do you relate to the disciples' state of being exhausted, confused, and afraid, and how might Jesus be inviting you to see beyond your current circumstances?
3. The sermon suggests that fear trains us to see catastrophe while God trains us to see possibility. What would it look like to actively train yourself to see with God's vision?
4. How does the story of Ilya Malinin's resilience challenge you to reframe your own failures or disappointments from disaster to determination?
5. Why do you think God rarely provides the big Hollywood-style transfigurations we might wish for, and what is the spiritual value of finding microbursts of hope instead?
6. What does it mean to you that the disciples had to walk back down the mountain after the transfiguration, and how does this reflect the reality of living out spiritual experiences in everyday life?
7. The sermon invites us to rise up rather than give up during Lent. What specific practices of rising up in hope, fearlessness, or joy might you commit to for the next 40 days?
8. How can recognizing and naming microbursts of hope become a form of spiritual resistance against the forces of negativity and despair in our world?
9. In what ways might sharing our microbursts of hope with others create a community of resilience and strengthen our collective journey toward Easter?
10. The voice of God at the transfiguration said, This is my son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. What might Jesus be saying to you right now that you need to truly listen to and trust?