

Living Gold

Rob Gieselmann, Epiphany Last, 2014 (Transfiguration)

As a kid, I collected coins. It was the late sixties, and early seventies, when you could still find silver dimes and silver quarters in change. Wheat pennies, too, and once-in-awhile I'd find WWII coins, like a 1943 steel penny – or a silver nickel with an oddly placed mint-mark above Monticello – both minted to help the war effort.

These coins were treasures, and I like hunting for treasure. So you will understand my delight to hear about the couple that found cans full of gold coins buried on their property in the Sierra foothills. The rusted cans looked like they were full of mud, But through the mud the couple could see a glint of gold. They took the cans home, and rinsed them out, discovering \$10m worth of antique and very collectable gold coins.

Gold holds allure. There is this quality to gold. It is not an alloy, nor an amalgamation, it is pure. 24 carat gold – and you know it when you see it – And this couple, even though a century of rust and mud occluded the gold, the gold still pierced the occlusion. *Likewise, there is a type of seeing, or understanding, that pierces the clay of humanity, a glint of gold that you glimpse in a way that circumvents the soul, bypasses intellect and emotion. It is an instantaneous knowing – I can tell you that I have discovered this treasure a handful of times in my life.

One was the day I first experienced faith. There I stood one minute without knowing God, without being able to answer the question of God's existence – and the next, I stood opposite, having inexorably touched faith. God exists, and if you ask me how I know this to be true, the only answer I can give is – I have seen gold.

Another time this type of insight happened was when I realized this truth: that what *really matters* in life is not the success one achieves – but the relationships one builds. I don't care if you become President of the United States – if you don't *see* and *experience* the people around you.

A third time, I realized that it doesn't matter whether people see you doing good, what matters is *doing* good.

These examples of personal revelation are mine – and I trust you've had similar experiences. But – and this is my point – We live this temporal and physical world hindered by dust, by mud – and the ever-present question is, *what guides you?* If not some foundational *sighting* of gold through mud, of truth through the cloud? I have based my life in large part upon these truths – the decisions I've made, the directions I've taken. I don't live into these truths perfectly – but they are a standard.

Peter, James and John experienced truth instantaneously – On the mountain, when they saw Jesus alive with light – They already knew Jesus, had seen his miracles, and heard his authoritative teaching. But they were not changed men until they experienced Jesus as light. Peter stated as much decades later – when he wrote: *we saw his majesty*. Before

the transfiguration, Jesus to the disciples was mud – human dust – but on this day, they saw the glint of gold shine through from some other universe.

* Eight or nine years ago, I took my kids to Costa Rica where we visited Mt. Arenal, an active volcano. Mt. Arenal glows at night – saffron and yellow, lighting the sky around its peak – When I think of Moses and Jesus, and their translation into light, I think of Mt. Arenal, only as a pale comparison. Because what Joshua saw of Moses, and what Peter, James and John saw of Jesus, was not physical. You won't hear me use the word *mystical* often, but this was mystical. This was the collision of this present world into some other world. And that is what mysticism is – the collision in your life of time and space into one that is not so bound. And you experience truth, but cannot explain it.

The only remaining question for the person of faith is, *how do you live into the truth's you've experienced?*

* Which leads us to Lent. Lent starts this Wednesday, when the priest marks your forehead with ashes, reminding you that you are but dust. This exercise is not a reminder that you are mortal – but it carries with it the hope of eternity. Yes there is dust and mud, but also the glint of gold.

The first question is, what is it you know to be doing – or how is it you know to be living your life – and don't or aren't? How are you failing to live into the insights you've experienced?

But the second question – it is more of a promise, really – is – it isn't too late.

For me, this year, Earth and Altar comes to mind. I know there is a better way to live on this earth - a more honest way to connect to God through earth. A way of integrity, that respects and restores the earth – I just haven't quite gotten there, yet. I intend to focus my Lent in that direction. For example, I plan to install a raised garden in my back yard, and to start composting. I plan to disconnect myself from electronics at least one day a week, to find more *porch time*, if you will – or hammock time. Time with my friends. Remember my own little insights – One of which is: it isn't what you become in life that counts – it is *who* you become. And this Lent, I plan to work on *becoming*. Likewise, I invite you into a Lent that will help you *become* the person you know you should and can be. Begin again. Live into your insights. Rediscover the glint of gold hidden in the mud.