One way to summarize today’s readings could be the word VULNERABILITY.

BRENE BROWN
I define vulnerability as uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.
To be human, is to be in vulnerability.

We start with ABRAM.
No, neither Sr. Peggy nor I mispronounced that name.
Abram and Abraham are the same person in one sense,
but very different people in another sense.
When we first meet him in the book of Genesis his name is Abram.
Not long after today's bible story, God gives him a new name, ABRAHAM
Abram was a 75-year-old, childless, nomad — a no count, a nobody.

Because of Abram's no-countess, his nothingness,
  God decides to show the world what God can do.
So to emphasize the desperateness of the situation,
  God asks the childless Abram to leave
  all that is safe and familiar.
God makes a promise that Abram will have children beyond his ability to count
  if he does what God asks.
And the story says: "So Abram went, as God had told him."

Talk about uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure!
Talk about vulnerability!

If you read on a little further in the story, you find that God gave Abram a new name, Abraham.
God did that because of Abram's willingness
  to put his trust in God's promise.
Another word for TRUST here might be VULNERABILITY.

St. Paul, in his letter to Timothy we heard this morning,
  also speaks of vulnerability.
Paul says, "Join with me in suffering for the Gospel, relying on the power of God,
  who saved us."... NOT according to OUR works,
  but according to his own purpose and grace.

We are chosen, not because we are especially talented or brilliant,
but because of what God intends to do in and through us.
It is God's doing, God's grace working in us.
We are the conduits of God's plan for saving all,
not despite our weaknesses, but really because of our weaknesses.

The more vulnerable you become, the better conduit of God's grace you are.
Every year on the Second Sunday of Lent, we hear one of the stories we call the Transfiguration. This year it's from Matthew's Gospel.

It's important to note that just before the transfiguration story, we find the story of Jesus asking the disciples who they think he is. Peter pipes up and says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now shortly after that, Jesus speaks to them all about his suffering and death and then his resurrection. It's the ultimate story of human VULNERABILITY. And Peter wants none of it.

So, in today's Gospel story Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain.

This Jesus who just previously to this had spoken about being brutally murdered, is revealed to them as the glorious Son of God. Despite the appearance of a very ordinary, humble human being, just beneath the surface is the glory of God.

They hear a voice from the cloud covering them all that says: "This is my beloved, favored Son. LISTEN TO HIM. Listen to what he is telling you."

The path to victory in life only comes through your willingness to be vulnerable, which the Cross represents.

The real path to glory in life is through uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.

All through Lent as our communion processional we are singing a lovely refrain. All processions are a statement of willingness to be vulnerable to follow the way of the Cross, however that gets played out in our individual lives, and in the life of our community.

It goes like this:
"Take, O take me as I am. (in all my frailty and vulnerability) Summon out what I shall be. (which is Your servant) Set your seal upon my heart (the seal is the CROSS) and live in me."

(The refrain is SUNG)

Jesus gathers at these tables so we might have the courage to be a little more vulnerable this week, to live in risk, uncertainty and emotional exposure.