

“Eyewitnesses to the Majesty”
A Last Sunday after Epiphany; 2 Peter 1:16-21
February 26, 2017
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
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I. PASSAGES THAT GRAB

Sometimes.....a passage from scripture just grabs you! Sometimes, in an “oh boy” kinda way. Like Doyle was talking about last week. He had that ‘tough one’—drew the short straw from the Lectionary choices last week!

“Love your enemies. Pray for those persecute you.” Oh boy. What can you say about that? That passage that has been preached on many times and I know from my own experience on countless occasions, that you wonder if anybody really “got it.” Or not.

In any case, Doyle did an *excellent* job last week of “wrestling” with a text—those hard words of Jesus’ that we all wish *weren’t* in the bible, and definitely wish didn’t ever come up in the preaching cycle!

He also shared honestly and openly about the **struggle** to bring new light and insight to those exhortations--which we can all appreciate—even if you’ve *never, ever* been in a position of “bringing the message” on a Sunday morning. Thank you, Doyle. The was a wonderful Birthday gift last week—one I appreciated from the bottom of my heart—not the least of which because I know I needed to hear that passage and mill it over in my own mind and heart. I hazard to guess we all do! For, things happen in life and people do things that do “persecute us” or hurt us or make us feel bad. Some days and weeks and years it happens more than others, but it happens.

II. PASSAGES THAT GRAB AND LIFT UP

And then.....

There are those passages from scripture that just grab you in a different way. Like, you might have read them a *hundred* times before, but just glossed over and made no connection.

But then, instead of “oh boy,” you have an “a-ha!” moment. This week this passage in 2 Peter grabbed me *that* way:

Eyewitnesses of the Radiance of Christ

16 We have not depended on made-up stories when we made known to you the power and radiance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.

You will do well to be *attentive* to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the *morning star rises in your hearts*.

Aha! I thought. How often do we give an iota of thought to the “radiance of Christ?” To the majesty of God, permeating our world and our lives. We talk about “letting our light shine,” but do we really notice all the places Christ’s light shines beyond us? In others? In the world? In circumstances? In creation?

We are bathed in radiance *every* day, and probably don’t even realize it! “You will do well to be attentive to this.....” exhorts the writer of Second Peter.

III. RADIANCE OF THE EARTHLY KIND

So, I set about being attentive to it. To the radiance all around us. Shining out of each of us, in us, through us and beyond us.

A. Majesty of Creation

One of the gifts of this community and social media is the capturing of radiance in stunning photos by several people in our midst. These pictures I share with you on the screens each week are from our own gifted photographers in our own beautiful slice of Heaven.

And, these photographers don't just "appreciate" and "capture" Nature as a hobby. They live it! They experience the Holy Majesty, and the healing power of Christ in the earth, sky, mountains, lakes and rivers around us. Joe Holub just endured his *fifth* back surgery on a Friday in Denver, and though the trip was long and painful, was celebrating being home on a Sunday—just two days later—basking in the healing views and presence of Mt. Princeton and a loving community.

Contrast that with a couple I met the same week who have not stepped outside their Salida home in 2.5 years!! Not gone out into the fresh air; not felt the sun on their faces; not gone for a drive and taken in the majesty.

We do well to be attentive to the glory. It can heal us body and soul. And is one of God's greatest gifts to us.

John O'Donohue reminds us:

"Much of the stress and emptiness that haunt us can be traced back to our lack of attention to beauty. Internally, the mind becomes coarse and dull if it remains unvisited by images and thoughts that hold the radiance of beauty."

Morgan Freeman, 21st century

"Learning how to be still, to really be still and let life happen-- that stillness becomes a radiance."

Thomas Merton, 20th century

"By reading the scriptures I am so renewed that all nature seems renewed around me and with me. The sky seems to be a pure, a cooler blue, the trees a deeper green. The whole world is charged with the glory of God and I feel fire and music under my feet."

B. Radiance from a stranger

A few days later, I heard a story of radiance of a different kind: Christ's love emanating out from a stranger.

Yes, it's another mother-in-law story! She's just so full of them. And, speaking of radiance: We saw Miss Jean literally light up the room the other day at—of all places—The Golden Corral! Over a plate of countless desserts! Watch the screen at the end of the service today if you want to see radiance.

But, back to the story. Jean and her friend Jim were quite enthralled to hop on the bus for an outing last week to Trader Joe's. They'd never been to one before! They gathered up about \$30 worth of purchases, all told, and went together to the checkout.

Jim reached into his wallet for a credit card to pay for the items, but it had expired. He reached for another. Also expired. And another. Yep. Expired. He grew concerned and flipped through his wallet, but admitted her rarely carries much cash. Jean said she didn't either. What were they to do? The tension mounted and they began to grow flustered, when all of a sudden, the woman behind them slid a credit card down the counter right past them and paid for their goods. In a flash! No resistance allowed.

C. Repo Man

Another story circled the airwaves a couple months back of a young man who had the job of going out and repossessing cars that were in arrear. The man was sent to an elderly couple's home. They couple was barely living at the survival level in their home and had fallen behind on their car payments.

The man did repossess the car, as ordered by the bank he worked for, but as he drove off, a light came on inside his head and it zapped his heart and he stopped. He could not do this. He could not take this lovely couple's car away. He pulled over, called the bank, asked what it would take to cover the

debt on the car and paid it himself. Took the car back to the owners, free and clear.

The radiance of Christ, alive and at work in the world.

Marilynne Robinson, Gilead, 21st century

"It has seemed to me sometimes as though the Lord breathes on this poor gray ember of Creation and it turns to radiance--for a moment or a year or the span of a life.

D. Birthday Wishes

And finally, an amazing moment in a family's life that proves that radiance is not one-directional. It beams full circle and every direction—from Christ within us, out into the world and into other's hearts.

Jackson is a boy with autism. On his 9th birthday, he was afraid he didn't have enough friends to have a birthday party. And then, this happened:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6D_E88WAPfM

Autistic boy—tons of cards for his birthday

<http://local12.com/news/around-the-web/boy-with-autism-surprised-by-birthday-wishes-from-celebs-and-around-the-world>

Radiance! All around us! In us, shining out of us! To us and through us!

“Jesus, Light of the World shine upon us. Set us free by the truth you now bring us. Shine on me, shine on me. Shine through me. Shine through us.”

Be attentive to this!! Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in *your* hearts!! Amen.