

SEEING IS HEALING --  
"Open Our Eyes to See Jesus Anew"  
February 14, 2021; 9:00 am  
Transfiguration – Mark 9:2-9  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

## The Transfiguration

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one<sup>[a]</sup> on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[b]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved;<sup>[c]</sup> listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

## The Coming of Elijah

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

## I. CLIMB UP THE MOUNTAIN WITH JESUS

Don't you love to go to the mountains? To get away from it all, escape the everyday, get *above* the ordinary stuff of life? The chores, the schoolwork and bookwork, meetings, and projects—virtual or actual, the taxes, all the tedious things we gotta do? And, of course, the pandemic, the quarantine, the medical schedules and the political wranglings that seem to never leave us be in our daily lives?

Don't you love to be caught up in that beauty, struck by awe at God's Creation? It transports us to a different place. Even if we can't quite get out there and *climb* right now—or even drive very far up the snowy passes, we can most likely look out the window, step out onto our porch, and find *some* way to go to the mountains. With our eyes, our sights, our spirits.

In our gospel story, Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him up a mountain to pray. While praying, Jesus starts to glow; his face becomes dazzling and bright. The three disciples are amazed as they witness the glory of Jesus! They see Moses and Elijah *speaking* with Jesus, and hear the voice of God himself.

They've gotten Away! Out of the house! Out of town! On vacation, on a trip. Off to camp! Taken out of their daily, mundane existence and given a taste of something miraculous, magical, sacred. As Christ is "transfigured" in front of them, their hearts are changed—transformed inside them.

It truly is a “mountaintop experience.”

Can you imagine it? Being there in that moment and hearing the voice of God say, "*This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!*"

If you had ANY doubts about who this Jesus guy was, what he wanted us to understand about walking with God, living life in love and faith, you'd know now!

Any doubts those original disciples or any disciples down through the ages might have about Jesus being *in line* with the tradition of the Jewish faith; of carrying on the continuous message of God from of old—through the prophets, standing in the company of Moses and Elijah and all the others—was answered in a powerful way on that mountain, in that moment.

Jesus was not only shining with the glory of God his Maker and Guide, but hanging with the Fathers of the Faith—being affirmed by his ancestors that he was carrying on that lineage of the prophets; on the right holy path, and showing that in spades to the disciples.

## **II. GLIMPSE OF GLORY**

What does one do when one finds oneself in a most-unexpected scene? For Pete, John and Jimmy did certainly not expect to be there—in the midst of a holy moment!

What should *any* of us do at such a moment?

Practice the Pause. Take off our shoes, notice that we are standing on Holy Ground, and *breathe*. Be in the moment. Be in the now—*for* now, just a little while. Soak it all in—even if you only have a moment to spare. It's a Sweet Spot moment—and you don't know when it might come again.

The guys didn't know what was awaiting them at the top of that hill. It was a “high mountain” by Israel's standards, but probably not by Buena Vista's!

We might find ourselves “seeing Jesus in a new light” in the most unexpected times and adventures. It might not be on a mountaintop at all. Or at the end of an arduous journey both physical and emotional, like it was for them.

It might not even be at the end of a rough couple of chapters in life and ministry—like they were experiencing in Mark 8 and 9, and in their relationship with Jesus and the Gang—and we are experiencing right now in our lives and times. But it might be.....

## **III. BUILDING BOOTHS**

So, what do those disciples do? Do they practice mindfulness for a moment on that mountain? Practice the Pause? Breathe in the Mystery? Most likely not.

<sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[b]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Peter doesn't know what to do with all this! Let's capture the moment! Let's stay here awhile—this is great! Let's construct a shelter, pitch a tent, build a booth, hang up a hut!

Now, I've preached about this moment for years, and puzzled over just what Peter was trying to do here. What's with the huts? Were Peter and guys trying to box it all in, control the mystery, capture the moment like grabbing an instamatic camera?

It would seem that those booths might just represent one of three high holy Festivals of Judaism—Sukkoth—and that this wasn't a bad idea at all, but a reason to celebrate! Maybe Peter recognized they were in the midst of a High Holy Moment and he wanted to party! The Jewish ancestors had shown up and this was cause for a celebration—a festival!

It could also be that this was so beyond their comprehension, that, along with a backyard BBQ, they needed a container. A framework for trying to understand the mystery, the incomprehensible.

We do that with prayer, religious practices and rituals—and it's not a bad thing! Put it into a framework we DO understand. A memory or a ritual or even a festival from our faith tradition.

Seeking to understand, trying to put our heads and hearts around God's Presence when it appears.

I've been seeing Peter as trying to “Put God in a Box” but maybe I'm the one who's been trying to stay in a box, sticking with my life-long interpretation of that moment!

Not allowing myself to look at that scripture passage with new eyes and perceptions. They were trying to make sense of it—in their own minds and hearts. Give this amazing, mystical mountaintop experience a framework—so they could grasp, ponder, chew on for a while—and hopefully not forget.

What if we looked at it like this instead:  
“Oh! This reminds me of that time at the **Bazaar!** We were all enjoying ourselves so much. We had been making crafts and building things and quilting and sewing and planning and organizing all year long—one in the Spirit of Bazaar!”

And here we were, on that first Saturday in November, all together and people from the community were streaming in and joy and warmth and hugs and smiles were in the air—it was palpable! It was a Festival! Something we looked forward to all year long and God showed up! The Spirit, the face of Christ, was shining—walking and talking in our midst, and giving us a glimpse of God's glory and Presence (capital P) in community!

I wanted to capture it. Stay in that moment a moment more. It wasn't about whether people were buying what we were selling. It wasn't even about what we

could do with those generous proceeds to give to Missions all over the world, all year long.

It was about being together in community and spirit, and extending our hands and arms and hearts OUT to our community—beyond our church building and circle, and *welcoming* in—strangers and friends alike. New friends to be made! New life and shared purposes; creativity and art and things of beauty—together.

That's what Peter wanted too!

“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[b]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

“Let's set up some booths. Let's make those rooms into Bazaar dwellings! Let's be about celebrating being the people of God together in this place, with God's Spirit shining and speaking to us—right in our midst! Visible and audible!

#### **IV. TAKING IT DOWN OFF THE MOUNTAIN**

What does one do, then, afterwards?

After we have seen the glory, felt the awe, experienced the Mystery? The disciples and Jesus didn't stay in the booths that Peter wanted to build.

They grabbed their trekking poles and trudged back on down the mountain. Why? Because there were people in need down there. Because ministry was a'callin! Sick, struggling, possessed by evil spirits, hungry for food and love—the people were there and they needed them.

Jesus and the first disciples didn't stay on the mountaintop, soaking it all in forever. They got back to life in their lane, taking the experience with them. Seeing a lot of things and people in a different light—with new eyes.

#### **V. POLICE IN THE PARKING LOT**

A story came across the airwaves last month from Denver: Just before midnight on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, District 5 Officers were dispatched to the parking lot of a hotel in northeast Denver on a report of children possibly living in a vehicle.

When the officers arrived on scene, they did locate a family sleeping in a car. The mother explained that she had recently experienced some trying times that included losing their home just before Christmas and that she was waiting for her paycheck to be deposited the next day, so that she could rent her family a hotel room.

The officers took some time to chat with the four kids, ranging in age from 11 to 2, and found that mom was doing a great job raising very happy and healthy children, but they definitely needed help getting out of the cold.

The officers spoke with the clerk at the hotel and managed to get a discounted price for a hotel room for the family. The pair split the cost and while one Officer helped get mom and kids settled in the room, the other ran out to grab them a late dinner from a nearby fast-food restaurant.

The mom wrote in to thank the officers for their kindness, adding that one of the kids deemed them "**cooler than**

**Spider-Man!**" The news report ended: "High praise and well-deserved if you ask us—great job, gents!"

These Police Angels "saw with new eyes." And lives were literally saved. They could have looked on this whole scene as a "problem to be solved; a ticket to be issued; a warning to be given." They could have seen simply a woman breaking the law of the city.

They did not—they saw a family in need. A mother, struggling to do the right thing, to care for her children between paychecks, between meals and a season of no home, waiting and hoping for a season of homing.

And, when they saw with those eyes—Christ's eyes of love and compassion—and looked upon that scene and that family—seeing the face of Christ in each face there—the cherubic ones of children—or maybe not so cherubic—dirty, faces unwashed and hair unkempt—and the face of a mother—maybe a victim of the system, or maybe even a victim of her own poor choices—they saw what Jesus Would Do.

They went to the store and got them what they needed. To eat, to wash, to live. Put them up in lodging and out of the dangerous parking lot. Not that different from the Good Samaritan in another story Jesus tells.

## **VI. WE ARE ALSO SHINING GOD'S GLORY**

So, as we celebrate this holy moment called Transfiguration Sunday, we consider with the disciples on the mountaintop how to see Jesus in a new light –

aglow with God's glory, but also reflect back onto ourselves, as the beloved children of God that we are.

Susan Lodge Calvert gives us this beautiful reflection as we consider that Transfiguration is a two-way street!

She says: "What if we could bear to gaze upon the face of God in such a way that we could not only *adore* but know ourselves adored, delighted in, desired! We would be *remade, recreated* by such encounter.

Now, most of us don't *shine* in the way Jesus did up this mountain. But what about the glory that shines from an exhausted fire fighters face? Or the glory that shines in the craftsperson as they bake, sow or carve with God given creativity and generosity?

Or the glory that shines quietly in the face of a teacher who patiently works with a student until they too see the pattern? Glory comes in all shades and we are each *charged* with the glory of God to shine *where* we are, *as* we are.

Just as we look upon God and are looked upon, so there is a *mutuality* to this shining. For in our baptism we are called into a faith community and this process of transformation is not an isolated one. As each of us looks upon the face of God and grows in radiance, so we will find that we are a light to one another. And we will find in the face of one another the face of Christ and know that others see in us the Christ."

## **VII. GO TO THE MOUNTAINTOP**

As you go into this week. This continuing journey with Jesus on Pivot Sunday—from the birth, to the baptism,

to the calling as disciples, to the healing and teaching ministry, through the messages and foreshadows that are hard to understand, up the arduous path to the mountaintop, to an unbelievable experience of glory and mystery, and now into Lent—that final journey to the Cross and the Resurrection—ponder the mountaintop as a reminder of *all* the points in the journey.

We are blessed that it's easy for us to practice the pause; take a moment and “look to the Mountains.” To remember those holy moments that happen not just once in our lives, but so many times when we least expect it.

Take a Pause, prayer, gaze at the mountains every now and then—or several times a day—throughout this Lenten journey of Prayer. God is in the pausing, the mindfulness of our Maker, and in the mirror of that shining glory—God's own face, and God's Light shining upon us and one another.

There's one important difference in the Transfiguration Event back then with the original disciples and us, today. Jesus swore them to secrecy—things hadn't all played out yet and he didn't want people getting the wrong idea about him and his purpose and pathway. So, he told them “mum's the word for now.”

But, for us, followers on the other side of crucifixion and resurrection, Holy Week and Easter, Jesus doesn't need us to keep mum. In fact, Jesus charges us to “go

and tell—what you have seen and heard.” God's glory, Christ's light, Christ's love and compassion, mercy and caring for the least of these cold children in a parking lot. And, to go and look for the opportunity to care for all God's beloved children, reflecting the face of Christ, in every moment of every day! To be shiners ourselves!

Let us begin our Lenten Journey through living and loving new lenses, as we seek eagerly with all our hearts where Jesus will lead us, together. Amen