

February 14th Worship
Transfiguration

Introduction to the Day

The Sundays after Epiphany began with Jesus' baptism and end with three disciples' vision of his transfiguration. In Mark's story of Jesus' baptism, apparently only Jesus sees the Spirit descending and hears the words from heaven. But now Jesus' three closest friends hear the same words naming him God's Beloved. As believers, Paul writes, we are enabled to see the God-light in Jesus' face, because the same God who created light in the first place has shone in our hearts to give us that vision. The light of God's glory in Jesus has enlightened us through baptism and shines in us also for others to see.

Reconnection and Affirmation

In place of our Confession and Forgiveness during worship, we will be having a 10 minute period where those watching online, and you reading this at home, will be invited to call someone that you haven't been able to gather with due to the Coronavirus pandemic. You are encouraged to use this time to reconnect with someone, and affirm the important presence they are in your life.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, the resplendent light of your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts. Transfigure us by your beloved Son, and illumine the world with your image, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lesson – 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

³Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Gospel – Mark 9:2-9

²Six 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, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

We hear of Jesus with Peter and James and John. They head up a mountain, a high mountain, apart by themselves. And there on that mountain Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, such that no one on earth could bleach them.

There appeared to them, Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus. Peter realizing what was that happening said, we should do everything we can to remain here. In fact, he says we should build dwelling places here for us to remain.

Looking back on years past of this Transfiguration Sunday and watching old sermons I came across the sermon from two years ago, and as a congregation we asked ourselves the question, we wondered aloud, if we ever had that mountain top experience, if we'd ever been in that situation where we've thought, "if this could just not end." Transfiguration Sunday is the last Sunday before the season of Lent and we frequently find ourselves talking about what is to come in Lent.

You see, on that mountain top, in that place that we don't want to leave, we realize all that is good about the experience. In thinking "this is a good place to remain" we are thinking of why it is so good to be where we're at, that we dare not mess up. As the saying goes, "if it isn't broke, don't fix it." Peter, on that mountain, realized the goodness of that experience and asked, "why would we ever leave here? We have with us Jesus and Elijah and Moses. We should remain."

But two years ago we talked about that thing that happens, that takes us down from that mountaintop experience. You might call it the Holy spirit. Jesus in this gospel text says we must go down. We must get on with life. We must go back to that calling to which God has called us. And we wondered last year, how good it is to be on that mountain top. But we also wondered what is that work that we need to be doing.

And we found ourselves ready to launch into the season of Lent, a season when we were going to find ourselves at midweek gatherings, huddled around tables and eating meals together just as Jesus did with his disciples. They gathered around food. We, too, were going to gather around food and we were going to hear scripture and we were going to pray. We were going to look into the lives of one another and hear what it is that our siblings in Christ were experiencing in their lives. And we were going to pray for one another and we were going to break bread with and for one another. And we were going to serve one another.

And we were excited because we were going to bring ourselves up to a mountain top experience. And we got a few weeks into the season of Lent, and we all know what happened next.

A few weeks into the season of Lent, one church calendar year ago, we realized that gathering with a large group of people singing the hymns that we loved, seeing faces and shaking the hands that we love to shake and embracing those whom we love to embrace would not be safe. And a year ago, the third-ish week of Lent, was the last time we were physically gathered as a congregation.

We were on the mountain top.

And for a moment, we were thrown from that mountain top experience.

Now, we could dwell on and focus on the bad that has come from this time of being away. And we do absolutely grieve those things that have led us to grieve. And we do wish that things that have happened hadn't or at least had happened differently, but we aren't brought down from the mountain top for bad things to happen. Jesus doesn't say we must come down from the mountain top because bad things are going to happen to us. But rather Jesus says we must come down from this mountain top because there is work to be done.

A year ago when we entered into this time of being thrown from the mountain top, one of the ways that we maintained connection to our people was with monthly deliveries to our children and families in Faith Formation. And, if you remember from our Annual Meeting, Anne shared that when these deliveries first started happening, there were 13 homes that we were stopping at. As I am writing this sermon for this week

Anne is again out delivering bags to our Faith Formation families, and the 13 homes that we stopped at have now become 23 homes.

This time in which we have been thrown from our mountain top of what we know, and what we believe to be the best it can be, we have realized that there are many families that we've been failing to connect with and other families who have been longing for a church to connect to. We have discovered other families that we didn't know had been along for the ride all along. And even more who have in this time found reconnection to their church home, and we had been missing them. Being thrown from the mountaintop, and doing this virtual church thing, has led us to realize that there was a demographic of families that we were missing.

This time of being physically apart has, has also made us realize those things that we take for granted. We started this worship service with a time of realization and affirmation in place of our confession and forgiveness. I'm hopeful you took the opportunity to call someone that you otherwise would have gathered at least one time with throughout this pandemic. I'm hopeful you took an opportunity to call them and say, "I want you to know how much you mean to my life," because we've realized those things that we take for granted when we are in the midst of those mountaintop experiences.

As I watched back worship services the last couple of years Transfiguration Sunday, I noticed a sanctuary full of people. And it was in those full sanctuaries that the message was heard that we are to come down from the mountaintop. Sometimes that trip down the mountain is not a gentle one, but rather we are thrown down. I couldn't help but notice the feelings that I was feeling, and I'm sure they are feelings that you feel too. The grief that we have for not being able to be together safely as a congregation in this physical space is real.

We take for granted those relationships, those hugs, those handshakes, those songs, that meal, the time of fellowship that follows worship – We take those things for granted.

People of God, they will return. We will one day be back together. That day will come. But this time of being a part doesn't mean that ministry has not happened.

It's always interesting when there is that occurrence where you run into someone from church. We've had a few of those instances and we had the stretch where we were offering our re-connect opportunities which we will again be doing in the Season of Lent. But, when those meetings happen you feel that feeling that is different from when you run into other people. And that feeling that you feel is a connection to your church family.

As we do get into Lent our theme is going to be "Journey Towards Wholeness." Our guiding verse for our journey towards wholeness is going to be Psalm 46:10. Psalm 46:10 was the verse that we shared the last time we were physically together for worship on March 17th, that as we reflected on those verses and that call, and the fear, grief, and angst that every one of us was feeling,

"be still and know that I am God."

This is going to be a verse that each week in Lent we are going to pick apart bit by bit. As we journey towards wholeness, we are going to reflect on those words, "be still and know that I am God," that we are a people gathered by God as the Body of Christ.

As we think back to the mountain top feeling of when we could all be together, we are going to think about how God has been active in the midst of what became, how God has called us to be still and how those moments of stillness become a time of sabbath. We'll ask what it means for us to know that it is God who is in the midst of it. We're going to look at what God in Jesus says to us in the "I am" statements. We're going to reflect on what

it means that we have a God who loves us so much that we hear in this transfiguration story, “and a cloud overshadowed them. And from the cloud, there came a voice. ‘This is my son, the beloved, listen to him.’”

That is the promise that we cling to that no matter where we find ourselves in life, we are on a mountain top. We might feel like we're in a Valley low, but hearing those words, “my beloved,” that God speaks into truth - God speaks those words into truth in our baptism - We are always brought to that mountain top of being God's beloved people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For the gospel proclaimed in word and deed, for communities of faith far and near, and for all who show the face of Christ throughout the world, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For creation: sun, moon and stars; life forming in the dark earth and ocean deep; mountains, clouds and storms, and creatures seen and unseen, and for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our stewardship of God's creation, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those responsible for safety and protection: for emergency responders and security guards, attorneys and advocates, civil servants and leaders of governments, that they witness to mercy and justice throughout the world, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For all who suffer this day, that Christ our healer transform sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For companions on life's journey in this worshiping community, for loved ones who cannot be with us this day, and for guidance during struggles we face, that God's glory is revealed around and among us, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their earthly, that their lives of service and prayer inspire us in our living, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Offering

In addition to our 1st Quarter Well Offering / Mission Offering going to Chippewa Valley causes as suggested by you, we will be collecting a special offering for the month of February to go towards supply needs for Personal Protective Equipment for our companion synod in Malawi's fight against COVID.

Offertory Prayer

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.

Amen.

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

(Holding the cup) Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name.

Amen.

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

"Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN"

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;

Jesus the beloved fill you;

and the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Carport Carside Communion returns on Ash Wednesday. We have two separate times that you will be able to come through and receive a Blessing of the Ashes and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

You are invited to come through at 11 am or 6 pm.

If you would like a moment of prayer in the Sanctuary while you are here you are welcome to do that as well.

Re-Connect Opportunities will be starting again in Lent.

9 am Coffee on Mondays

11 am Bible Study with 12 pm lunch on Tuesdays

Sanctuary open for prayer on Thursdays

Ash Wednesday

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in
Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of
compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water,

pour out your mercy over us.

Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.

**Rebuild what we have ruined
and mend what we have torn.**

Wash us in your cleansing flood.

Make us alive in the Spirit

to follow in the way of Jesus,

as healers and restorers of the world you so love.

Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails.

The promise rests on grace:

by the saving love of Jesus Christ,

the wisdom and power of God,

your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them
no more.

Journey in the way of Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10 Be still and know that I am God

Reflection

As we set out on this Lenten Journey, a *Journey Toward Wholeness*, we would do well to ask ourselves what exactly wholeness is. While the Lent intent is often personal fasting, reflection, and repentance, the result is often communal. After all, isn't what God intended?

We start Lent hearing the words, "remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." These words return us to our beginning, when we were dust, when God breathed life into the nothingness that was and what came next was God's people. Beloved.

Perhaps the question we should be asking isn't, "what IS wholeness?" but, rather we should ask, "wholeness for whom?" That answer is God. "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." As God's people, we are whole, and we are wholly God's with all our flaws. And it is good. Not just as individuals, but as people of faith, the Body of Christ.

You are invited to take the small baggie of ashes, add a small drop of oil and mix it together. Then place your thumb or finger in the ashes and make the sign of the cross on your forehead. As we make this mark we are reminded of our immortality. We are reminded that though our humanness is messy, we are God's. The glistening beauty of a watery baptismal cross is covered with the ashen mark of dust. To dust we shall return.

We live in that promise, journeying towards wholeness as the body of Christ. Thanks be to God. AMEN

You are invited to use the At-Home Communion Liturgy for Ash Wednesday Communion, or come for Ash Wednesday Carport Carside Communion and blessing of ashes at 11 am or 6 pm.