

DEVOTIONALS:

19 - 25 FEBRUARY 2023

A Transfiguration Reflection

Read: Matthew 17:1-9

“Let us pray to the Lord...”

"...Lord, hear our prayer"

O Lord of heaven and earth, we give you all praise are holy and glorious. Your glory appeared to Moses appeared to your people, Israel, when they traveled Your glory filled Jesus Christ your Son on the Mount prepared to lay down his life for our salvation. As we be able to catch a better glimpse of his glory as he and forever. We know that he will return some day that time remind us over and over of what we so his by right. And, Lord, make that glory clear here



and honor for you alone on the mountain. And it through the wilderness. of Transfiguration as he worship today, may we lives and reigns today with all glory, but until easily forget, that glory is today.

We give you thanks, Father, for Sunday. It is a day of rest for us, and a day in which we come into your presence for renewal and worship. But soon it will end and it will be necessary for us to come down the mountain and enter again into all the responsibilities and stress of work and life. We enjoy this time in your presence, but we ask for your presence to go with us during the days of this week when we will be so easily distracted and may even lose our way. Be patient with us. Redirect us. Hold before our hearts the vision of living as Kin-dom and Beloved Community people who aim to carry out your will faithfully. Be with the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, the rich and the poor. Lead us into a week that will be marked by obedience to you and sensitivity to the needs of others around us.

There are some whose needs must be lifted up for your special attention this week. Some of your children are lonely and grieving. Some feel misunderstood and forgotten. Some are hospitalized and weak. Some are frightened and anxious. Some doubt and others have lost their way. Some are deeply concerned about their children and others are concerned about their parents. Some live with brokenness and need your power of healing. Some are living at a distance from you and must be drawn closer. Still others are living with poverty, oppression and injustice and in need of protection and care. Give them all rich measures of your grace and mercy. In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Matthew 17:1-9 is an account called The Transfiguration, and it was a pivotal moment in Jesus' life as well as in the lives of Peter, James and John. Matthew, Mark and Luke, all record it in their gospels. **(Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:28-36)** Peter refers to it in his second letter. **(2 Peter 1:16-18)** John does not record the actual incident in his gospel, but he does allude to it when he says, “We have seen his glory” **(John 1:14)**, plus he gives us a full description of the glorified and transfigured Christ later on in the book of Revelation. **(Revelation 1:13-16)**

The Transfiguration of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 17 is one of the hardest things for many people to grasp. Even for myself growing up church, it was never mentioned a lot. People like to hear about Jesus for his Sermon on the Mount, his miracles and healings, and his teachings about love... but transfiguration? This is where you have to step out of your comfort zone, go beyond the fair-weather Christianity, and say: Jesus was not just a man, or a baby in a manger at Christmastime, but was God in human form, standing next to the great prophets Moses and Elijah who had lived over a thousand years before.

No one can completely prove or disprove details that happened over two thousand years ago, but human nature can give us a lot of clues. What would make the disciples of Jesus continue to do all the things they did after Jesus' crucifixion? They traveled the world telling about Jesus, to the extent of being jailed, tortured, penniless, and all of them having died

a horrific death for their beliefs, but never once recanting their story. It would have to be something supernatural that could not be explained any other way. There are only two events that could satisfy their actions: the Transfiguration and the Resurrection.

Matthew 17:1-13 ~ The Transfiguration ~ Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. He was transformed in front of them, and His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud and said: "This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him. Listen to Him!"

When the disciples heard it, they fell facedown and were terrified. Then Jesus came up, touched them, and said, "Get up; don't be afraid." When they looked up they saw no one except Him—Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Don't tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

So, the disciples questioned Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" "Elijah is coming and will restore everything," He replied. "But I tell you: Elijah has already come, and they didn't recognize him. On the contrary, they did whatever they pleased to him. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them about John the Baptist.

The Disciples went on to teach the ways of Jesus, spreading it to the rest of the world. From the Old Testament prophets, written hundreds of years before Jesus: Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1-2; Zechariah 9:9. **We know the transfiguration was both a miracle and a sign, but what exactly did it signify? What did it mean for Jesus, what did it mean for the disciples, and what does it mean for us today?**

I suspect every one of you could tell stories about the changes you have experienced, the changes that are happening in your life right now, or the changes that you hope for or that you fear happening. **How do we live in the midst of change? What handholds (support or guide someone during a learning process or a period of change) are there when it seems the world around us as well as within us is changing?**

I wonder if the disciples in today's gospel (Matthew 17:1-9) might be asking the same kind of questions, and if they too are feeling the wind of change blowing through their lives. Here's why I say that. Immediately before Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up the mountain he tells them and the others that he must suffer, die, and be resurrected on the third day. He will tell them this again after they come down from the mountain.

What happened on that mountain top took place between Jesus's two statements of impending change. Maybe that event, what we call the transfiguration, was about preparing and helping the disciples live through the coming change. Maybe the transfiguration story has something to teach and show us about how to live in the midst of change. Maybe that's why every year the transfiguration is the gospel we hear on the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, the Sunday before we enter the season of Lent, a season that focuses on change. Change, whether on the mountain top of life or in the valley of the shadow of death is a reality for all of us.

"Listen to him." One of the things I am aware of in the midst of change is how many voices begin to speak. Some are outside of us and some are from within. There are voice of commentators chattering about what is happening and what should be done, voices of judgment, voices of second guessing, voices of fear. There are voices of self-doubt, self-criticism, and all the "would'ves, should'ves, and could'ves. Some voices tell us to run and hide, and others tell us to fight and resist. Some voices ask questions and want explanations. Other voices deny what is happening, blame, or declare it to be the end of the world.

So many voices cry out for attention. Not every voice, however, is helpful or worth listening to. Some voices may sound sweet but they are not good for us. The story of the transfiguration says there is only one voice to listen to. The voice of God speaks from the bright cloud overshadowing Peter, James, and, John, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him."

What if in the midst of change we sought to hear and listen to that one voice, the voice of Christ? What if we kept our ears open to what he is saying in our life and world today? To let ourselves become aware of and attentive to what he is saying and doing, to let his concerns and desires become our concerns and desires, to let his way of engaging life and the world become our way of engaging life and the world.

It would mean that whatever change comes upon us it does not have the final word. There is another voice. Jesus is always speaking a word larger and more powerful than all the other voices. In the midst of change Jesus speaks a word of life, a word of hope, a word of forgiveness, a word of mercy, a word of beauty, a word of generosity, a word of courage, a word of love, a word of healing. ***Jesus speaks a word to and for you and me. Are we listening to that word, to his voice?***

“Get up.” I suspect we’ve all faced change that has caused us to stumble and fall, paralyzed us, or left us overwhelmed. Again, this is not about whether the change is perceived as good or bad. It’s about regaining our balance and getting our feet back under us. It’s about stepping into new life when we aren’t sure what that looks like or if there really is a new life awaiting us.

Jesus comes to us in whatever circumstances of change we find ourselves, touches us, and says, “Get up, be raised” It’s the promise that though life has changed, it has not ended. Somehow new life is hidden in the midst of change, even when cannot see it or do not believe it. God uses the changing circumstances of our lives and world to bring us into new life. I’m not suggesting that God directly causes change to come upon us. I’m suggesting that God never wastes a chance to draw forth new life.

“Do not be afraid.” Most of us I suspect live with some level of fear. Change often brings about fear – the fear of losing what we love, value, and desire; and sometimes it’s the fear that comes with getting what we want. In the midst of change Jesus says, “Do not be afraid.” He speaks to the heart of the human condition. They are the words we need to hear when we are raised up and back on our feet.

His words do not magically eliminate our fear. Instead, they are the call to take a first step into a new and changed life despite our fear. They are the assurance, once again, that change, does not have the final word, Christ does. We are not called to be fearless but to be courageous in the midst of change and fear.

I don’t know what changes you are dealing with, but “listen to him.” Be raised up. Do not be afraid. What if those words are holy wisdom for times of change? What if they are the means by which we step into our own transfiguration? Maybe it wasn’t Jesus who changed on the mountaintop. Maybe it was Peter, James, and John. Maybe their eyes were opened and their seeing changed, so that everywhere they looked they saw “Jesus himself alone.” Maybe they saw Jesus for the first time as he had always been.

If that’s true, and I believe it is, then it means that every change – whether good or bad, wanted or unwanted, joyful or sorrowful – is brightened with divine light and filled with God’s presence.

LISTEN TO HIM. BE RAISED UP. DO NOT BE AFRAID! AMEN!

PRAYER & CONCERNS

- **We still need YOU! We need leaders and volunteers to serve in various positions on committees and boards. You may not think you have the gift, talent, and/or time to serve, but all are called to work in the kingdom. We need you!**
- Our **church family members and friends** are experiencing all forms of challenges and concerns. “Lord, give me the courage to face the challenges and ills that come. Help me to persevere and not give up. Give me the strength to face these storms. Pour out your peace over me and keep me in your perfect peace. Amen.
- **Bro. Bob Krell**, after spending a couple of days in the hospital, has returned home. He is appreciative for your prayers and cards for renewing of strength and healing. Thank you, God, for hearing and answering my prayer.

Please mail cards and notes of support and encouragement to: Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.

- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** having been diagnosed with Epilepsy, is still working with her medical team to find the correct medications and doses to control the seizures. She is very grateful for your love, prayers and support. Special prayers for Mr. Pat as he cares for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Our Sweet, Sweet Gentleman, **Mr. Allan Kieckhafer** who passed away on January 25, 2023 was celebrated with a loving, honorable and joyous Celebration of Life Service on 30 January 2023. We have stood on the shoulders of this saintly giant and we give God praise and thanks for all that Mr. Allan taught us, the amazing legacy of service he has left us to live into and the vital a role he played in helping us grow into who we are now. “Almighty Father, you have built up your Church through the love and devotion of your saints: inspire us to follow the example of Mr. Allan whom we grieve his passing. May we, Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, rejoice with him in the vision of your glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.” We pray for Mr. Allan’s family and the community of West Bend. Amen.
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** is still admitted at The Pavilion at Glacier Valley. She requests your prayers and support as she continues to journey with health concerns. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Words cannot begin to express the heartfelt sadness and grief we are experiencing for the passing of our beloved **Ms. Beverly “Bev” June Vogel**. To Ms. Bev’s family: “Always be assured that you have our full support, prayers and love.” May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection. Amen.
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We’re keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Jeri Bowerman**, had cardiac stents inserted. Please send her your cards and notes of love, support and courage: Ms. Jeri Bowerman, New Perspectives Senior Living, 2130 Continental Drive, #322, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Dick Simmons**, diagnosed with acute leukemia. “Dear God, we place our worries in your hands. We place Mr. Dick’s sickness under your care and humbly ask for strength and comfort. Be near him in times of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Dick’s strength and courage may not fail; give him confidence in the power of your grace, that even when he is afraid, may he put his whole trust in you. We pray all of these things in Your name. Amen. Mr. Dick, Ms. Shirley and family, we are sending you love, hugs, support and prayers during this difficult time. Cards, notes filled with prayers and support can be mailed to: Mr. Dick and Mrs. Shirley Simmons, 2908 Valley Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr.**, continues to quietly face medical challenges. Your cards and notes of support and well wishes for Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.

Prayer: As we hear your story of transformation, O God, we pray for your Spirit to transform us. Transform our eyes to see the light of your glory. Transform our hearts to feel the goodness of your presence. Transform our minds to understand a fraction of your will. Transform our world to recognize the ties that bind us to one another. We give thanks, O Holy One, for the goodness of your words, the goodness of your world, and the goodness of your Spirit who beckons us to follow. Give us the hope and faith, O holy one, to look and up and see your presence around us. Give us the strength to know that we are not alone. Amen. *Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martín*