

We see in the scripture today a pervading theme - the radiant and glorious light that emanates from the Lord's holy presence and Jesus. Today is a time when we can reflect on a moment of profound significance in the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What I hope you take away as you leave this place is a consideration of the infinite and transformative power of God's glory. Church isn't about coming already cleaned up and "fixed." This is not about getting our stuff together so that we are worthy to sit in the pews or to listen - this is a place to come broken and recognize that through God's amazing grace and transformative power, we can be healed. This glory is not confined to times when we are on top of the world; No, it is not just for those mountaintop moments. This power is meant to permeate every aspect of our journey. We are called to carry the light of Christ into the world, sharing the love, grace, and truth that radiate from His divine presence.

Yes, the Transfiguration is a mysterious event that holds valuable lessons for us as we journey in faith. Mountains hold a special significance in the Bible. I read that mountain top or hill experiences are mentioned more than 500 times in scripture. In particular, the setting for this amazing part of Jesus' life was upon a mountain.

When my daughter, Annalise, was a little girl we used to break into the jingle from the Ranier beer commercial of my youth. Every time Mount Ranier was out in all its magnificent glory, we sang the song from this off-beat commercial back from the 1980s. Many of you probably remember this commercial. The Spokesman - Review, Spokane's paper, describes it best as a "TV ad simply showed a motorcycle rider on a rural highway heading toward Mount Rainier, with bike sounds revving “Raiiiiiii-nieeeeeer-beeeeeer.” To this day, when we are driving towards Enumclaw and the mountain is out, we break into that jingle. While my teaching Annalise the name of the Mountain that dominates our Eastern view might be slightly inappropriate, it was fun. Many of you have hiked our beloved Mount Ranier and you probably also have this fondness and attachment for this beautiful mountain.

The Bible mentions mountains many times as places where people of God encounter the Lord.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him, indicating the intimacy of the moment. While they were there, Jesus underwent a profound transformation in appearance. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah, two significant figures from the Old Testament, appeared and talked with Jesus. The disciples witnessed this divine manifestation.

The Transfiguration is considered a significant event in the Christian tradition as it symbolizes the divine nature of Jesus. It serves as a revelation of Jesus' glory and confirms his identity as the Son of God. The voice of God is also said to have been heard, declaring, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The Transfiguration is also interpreted as a preview of the glory that Jesus possesses and a foreshadowing of the resurrection. It is a pivotal moment in the Gospels that strengthens the disciples' understanding of Jesus' divine nature and mission. The presence of Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, acknowledges Jesus as the fulfillment of both.

Today's sermon is about living in the light of the magnificence of God's love for all humanity. As we reflect on the Transfiguration, let us consider its relevance to our lives as disciples of Christ. The transformative power of God's glory is not confined to mountaintop experiences; it is meant to permeate every aspect of our journey. We are called to carry the light of Christ into the world, sharing the love, grace, and truth that radiate from His divine presence.

We live in a world filled with horrific images and terrifying events. Amongst the shootings and gut-wrenching images that fill our TV screens as we watch the news, we know that the Lord is feeling the pain and the suffering too. We are his hands and feet.

This past week a friend posted an article about the KKK in Whatcom County. I read further and found out that there was also a considerable presence close to us; the same thing happened in Eastern King County. There was a pervasion within the population that likely shared the same racism and biases that the KKK held. Mostly, the KKK protests were antisemitic, anti-Catholics, and anti-immigrant.

In my research, I discovered that church leaders and prominent citizens were a part of this organization. In Bellingham, many of the rallies and parades involving the KKK dressed in their hoods and costumes occurred on the main streets of the city. Growing up on Lopez Island where there were no stop lights or parallel parking places, meant our driver's education teacher would take groups of students to Bellingham to navigate driving in the city environment. I had my senior pictures taken at the photo studio on that very street where the KKK protested. To know that at the time I was first driving the streets of Bellingham in the early 1980s, less than 60 years after hooded klansmen walked those very streets, was startling.

In about 1924, the organized KKK groups disbanded, and the members went off to live their lives in the communities around Bellingham. Sadly, their biases and racist ideologies also went with them. When those klansmen dissolved their official affiliations their thinking and what they had been taught undoubtedly were incorporated into the fiber of the Bellingham community and larger Whatcom County. I'm sure the same thing would occur down in Issaquah and the surrounding communities.

Annalise has struggled with fear and my job as her mother is to help her navigate life despite those fears. She is afraid of some things, just as many children and sometimes adults are too. She was afraid of the dark and what lurked under her bed. So, in response to the Facebook post, I said this, "Evil walks through our lives all the time. I remember telling Annalise that monsters are not lurking under beds but walking through our communities disguised as regular people. There are also angels in our midst and people who are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ."

Someone pushed back on my post and wrote this in response, "I like your basic thoughts. I was trying to imagine being a child afraid of the dark and hearing that monsters are not just under the bed but all around us. Then I read the last sentence and realized you put it all in perspective for her."

Sadly, there are "normal" looking people walking into schools with automatic weapons, forever changing the lives of the people and families of loved ones killed. There is systemic racism that makes it difficult for people of color to own homes and acquire education and training for better-paying jobs. People are living on our streets with addiction issues, trying to struggle just to survive.

Yes, people are walking these streets with bigotry and malice in their hearts. But there are also people of God to balance and to prevail. God's kingdom will be built. Justice will reign down.

No, it will not be easy and there will be seemingly insurmountable obstacles, but God's purposes will prevail. The powers of goodness will be overcome. The exciting thing is that we can be a part of building God's kingdom, a place where bigotry, malice, and injustice will have passed away and where goodness and love replace all the hatred and vitriol.

As you leave this place, may the lessons of the Transfiguration inspire us to listen to Jesus, heed His teachings, and allow His transformative glory to shine through us in our daily lives. As we descend from this metaphorical mountain, let us do so with hearts ablaze with the love of Christ, sharing His light with a world in need of hope and redemption.