

Mark 9:2-9

Transfiguration

May the words of my heart and the meditations of my mind be acceptable to you O Lord our rock and redeemer.

Grace and peace to you dear siblings in Christ

Today our reading from Mark tells of the story of the transfiguration of Jesus and while the imagery is something, I love to imagine it can often be a story that leaves me asking okay Jesus AND?

Jesus is transfigured. He is transformed from the vision once seen by the disciples and into something/someone new. God's voice names and claims Jesus. Then just as quickly Jesus is back to his usual self and down the mountain, they all went while Jesus told the disciples not to say a word to anyone. I mean on one hand sure. Can you imagine being the disciples trying to explain to someone who wasn't present what had taken place?

Let us put it this way. If I came to you and said while on a hike Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah and God, then spoke to me while Jesus became so shiny words cannot describe it I am fairly positive you might just think I was losing my mind.

But that is just it Jesus' transfiguration can not to be looked at with the assumption that we can understand it. It means to draw us in toward what is abnormal or unnatural in our minds in our world today. Transfiguration draws us into the mystery of God.

But then if we are to be like Jesus how do we too experience transfiguration?

The word "transfiguration" comes from the Greek word "metamorphosis", which speaks to a change in form or nature. Theologian David Lose this week talks about that Jesus' transfiguration does not alter who he is but gives to those who see the change a new understanding of him because they see him outwardly in a different light. Jesus did not change of the inside. The core of who Jesus was remained the same. What changed was how others perceived him. With their physical eyes they saw a brilliant light, brighter than the sun, and with the eyes of their souls they experienced the overwhelming love of God. The overwhelming love of God.

Ah

What if the work today is to look at the transfiguration truly as it is transfiguration being the external change while transformation is the internal change? We need to remember that these two words, while similar, cannot be exchanged for one another. As well that same Spirit is still transfiguring people today. We don't have to explain first-century miracles to trust that God's transfiguring Spirit is timeless and at work within each of us today. We do not have to understand everything to see the beauty of God at work in the world, continually transfiguring us into the people we were created to be.

What if we too have been living in a transfiguration for nearly the past year? Stay with me now. Our worship has been transfigured. Our community transfigured but at the core we are still the same. Lovingly walking with each other through prayer and community while apart.

Now please do not mishear me. God truly does transformative work on our hearts and in our lives constantly, but the story today talks to us about Jesus's transfiguration. How his outward

appearance and understanding came to be. How too can we see this past year and the transfiguration we have all gone through and our church has gone through? All the while God's transfigurative love ushers us through.

While Jesus' transfiguration happened on the mountain top, I want us to also think about the transfigurations we have witnessed in our lives. It is not necessarily that we only witness them in mountain top like experiences. The truth of the matter is most often transfiguration happens in the valley and in the depths of the hard parts of our lives. God continues to work through others, showing God's unending love for us using other's actions and works. God comes along side us both in times when life is amazing, and we want to shout from the top of the mountain and when we are in the rockiest parts of our lives wanting to scream into what seems like the never-ending abyss.

When we start to think about transfiguration I am drawn back to various people in my life. Have you ever had those people in your life where they come into your life and you have no idea who or how they will be in your life and the impact of their presence? I think about parents, grandparents, teachers. But also, co-workers, neighbors, and the coffee shop baristas. How often do we see these people in a new and transfigured way when we see love come from their words or actions?

I would be amiss if I did not also mention today is valentine's day.

The hallmark holiday where we celebrate love in all its various forms. As a parent I know love can be instantaneous. The second our children were born there was this fierce love and desire to care and protect them that arose. The deep transformative love that changes you from the inside out and your life is never the same again. Somehow your heart expands to love even more than before. Through the exhaustion of diaper changes, late night feedings, and mountains of laundry we do it because of the love we feel at the core of our souls.

But there is also transfigurative love. Love that comes not instantaneously but that comes over time from actions and interactions. When I met my husband there was a friendship that began over time we began to transfigure in the eyes of the other and it was not that either of us were necessarily changing but rather we were able to see each other in a different light. I can remember a walk around the capital one Sunday afternoon. I was exhausted as I had preached two sermons, led Confirmation, and adult bible study but had agreed to meet Mark for a quick lunch and a walk. Something on that walk changed how I saw him. In conversation where we were vulnerable with each other and talked honestly about where we saw our lives and what we wanted I began to experience Mark in a new way. It was not that he changed in that conversation. Rather it was that my way of seeing him transfigured in a way that allowed me to enter a new part of our relationship with mutual vulnerability that turned over time into a love that then has transformed the both of us.

On valentines day especially we see love as this mountain top experience. But transfigurative love comes in all ways, shapes and sizes. We find God meeting us through others. It is also important that while we celebrate romantic love on valentines day transfigurative love comes to us through all fashions of love. I think of my best friends. Those relationships that change over time and how we see the other changes with that which opens our hearts and minds to a whole new experience of the other person. These deep connections that carry us through the good and

the bad. This year more than ever it has been those transfigured relationship that help carry us through when uncertainty and frustration ran high.

In our music today you will hear the song “How good, Lord, to be here.” It is possibly my favorite song to use on transfiguration Sunday because the lyrics give us this amazing imagery of Jesus’ transfiguration. I debated this year asking Steven to put it in the worship because we are not physically here. But even though we are not together I realized the song lyrics are still the same. As they come streaming through your speakers it is still true. How good Lord to be here. To be worshipping, to be breathing, to be living examples of God’s love poured out. What pushed me to include it, however, is the final verse.

How good, Lord, to be here!

Yet we will not remain;

But since you bid us leave the mount,

Come with us to the plain.

God’s transfiguring love meets us on the mountains and in the valleys and we enter into community with those around us. Just as Jesus did not stay on the mountain neither do, we. We continue in our journey of life knowing the Spirit is with us, guiding us along as we follow the example of Jesus. So yes, How Good, Lord to be here! Apart but together. In our homes, cars, offices, or wherever you may be experiencing this worship.

How good it is to be here. We have always been together in Spirit and soul. While our bodies are distanced our hearts are not. So, let us continue to be our true selves, sharing God’s transfiguring love in our lives. May our eyes and hearts be always open to seeing God’s transfigurative love at work in the world and in others. Amen.