

The Transfiguration

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Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“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.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Jesus, the Very Thought of You”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 50:1-6

“The Mighty One, God the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.
³ Our God comes, he does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
round about him a mighty tempest.
⁴ He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
⁵ “Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”
⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge!”

Hymn of Praise: [“Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness”](#)

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.”

1st Reading: [2 Kings 2:1-12](#)

2nd Reading: [2 Corinthians 4:2-6](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 9:2-9](#)

Hymn of the Day: "How Good, Lord to Be Here!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcAQTr7AWDQ>

The Message: Vicar Karen Pugatch (Video Link) <https://youtu.be/5C8eWCDFYIA>

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 anymore, but only Jesus.

⁹As 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 think it is wonderful to be able to preach the bookend texts of the season of Epiphany here at Epiphany. This season which began with the visit of the Magi, called Theophany in the Eastern Church, the revelation of the incarnation and ending this week with the Transfiguration-the revelation of Jesus' divinity. It is a season when we have taken the time to try to understand how God is revealed in the world and in us-through God's action in the world and through our own actions in response as we go out as disciples of Jesus.

I don't know about you, but I think for many contemporary Christians it is easy to comprehend Jesus as fully Divine. The problem comes for us in seeing Jesus as fully human. I think for the disciples, it was the other way around. They lived side by side with Jesus and for them the fully human part was easy, it was the fully divine part that was difficult to wrap their heads around. Despite the teaching, the many healings and casting out of demons they witnessed, when they looked at Jesus, they saw their rabbi and friend. They seem a bit obtuse, especially in Mark's telling, when it comes to the true meaning of what Jesus says and does throughout his ministry.

They have just come from Caesarea Philippi the seat of Roman Government in the province of Galilee. In front of the Temple of Pan Jesus has asked them "Who do you say that I am?" and there in the face of the Roman government, Peter claims Jesus as the Christ- but his fear takes over and he is admonished as Satan because his thoughts are not on the good news that God is with us rather, he is frightened because he does not like what he hears is to come-that he will lose his beloved teacher, when he hears that discipleship will look like a cross.

So, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain where they witness Jesus in all his glory- they get to see Jesus aglow with the divine light- Transfigured-standing there right in front of them on the mountain with two of the most honored prophets in the scriptures, he is changed. In his fear and wonder, Peter wants to build them huts for them to stay in -wants to try to contain this wonder, to stay right there in the midst of the glory of God-to dwell there in the blessing. But they are overshadowed by a cloud and they hear the voice from heaven announcing the joyful news-proclaiming their friend as the beloved child, there they are told to listen to him. Then it is over. They are alone on the mountaintop with Jesus. They cannot stay there because following Jesus is not a static thing it requires movement.

Much like Moses and Elijah the disciples encounter the divine at a time when they are a bit discouraged. They have just been told that Jesus will be killed-maybe they were too distraught to hear that bit about being raised on the third day. Much like Moses and Elijah they have work to do-they have been told to listen to Jesus.

The thing is that it is often difficult to hear what God is saying to us, to trust in the promise we have been given. This has been true for the disciples just as it was for people throughout the history of God's chosen people. Time and time again the people did not listen to Moses, they turned away from God to worship idols-they destroyed the tablets of the law and once again Moses had to climb the mountain and stand before God on behalf of a seemingly ungrateful people. And in the end, Moses did not even get to enter the promised land! Someone else completed that journey with the people.

Elijah, considered by many to be the most important prophet in the Old Testament, with the help of God defeats the prophets of Baal and is hunted down. Elijah runs to the wilderness, to a cave on a mountain to hide, but God speaks to him there not in wind, earthquake, or fire- but in the silence-sending him back to the work he is to do. Eventually, his work is carried out by his successor-Elisha. Elisha who much like the disciples, does not want to hear that his master will be taken up by God-that he will be left to carry out mission that Elijah started. Elisha who is unsure of himself, who wishes for a double portion of what his master had- yet God worked through Elisha!

There on that mountain in the presence of these two pillars of the faith the disciples are standing at a threshold. They stand poised to step across from what they know-from following this man Jesus, crossing that threshold they will follow the divine into the world, down the difficult road to Calvary onward to the resurrection. Crossing this threshold will bring pain, sorrow and loss and of course great joy and responsibility. They step out into a different world and will not be able to go back to the way things were because they have caught a glimpse of

the Glory of God, have heard the voice-Jesus is revealed in the fullness of his humanity and divinity and they have been invited maybe even instructed to follow.

This vision of the transfiguration, this blessing of seeing Jesus in his Divine glory is not the message of this story. I think the meaning will be understood in the resurrection, when the glory of God will be seen by all-that is when the proclamation of Jesus' divinity must be made-when Jesus' mission will be fully handed over to the disciples just as Moses handed it over to Joshua and Elijah to Elisha. They are not required to complete the task God does that, They are also required to not step away from their part of the task, but to cross over the threshold in front of them and carry on the work which has been entrusted to them-bringing the Good News to the world. It is in the stepping over of the threshold and coming down the mountain that we disciples will understand what has been revealed in the transfiguration. We will begin to understand that we follow Jesus-fully divine and fully human. In our following we will stumble and fall and we will meet great challenges and this is when the blessing will be carried out as we disciples leave our fear behind and take up our crosses -not crosses of suffering and death, but crosses that represent our call to public ministry in service of God. We all are transformed in Christ, equipped for this ministry that does not lead to death, but that confronts the powers of evil that try to interfere with the saving power of God. Ministry that shows forth the light of God in the world.

"For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
if only we're brave enough to be it." Amanda Gorman "The Hill We Climb"

On the mountain, Jesus is transfigured and we along with the disciples are transformed. We are called to step over that threshold and to journey with Jesus towards the cross. God is calling us over the edge and down the mountain to the place where the real work of discipleship is done. We will journey with Jesus towards the cross and also over that threshold between life and death-a threshold that Jesus destroys in the resurrection. We are commanded to listen and then sent down from the mountain to proclaim Jesus crucified, risen and ascended.

Just as they Maggi followed the star to witness the incarnation and having seen the star in the child's eye leave by another way, we follow Jesus on a path other than the one we may have chosen ourselves-changed by our encounter with the divine. Taking up our crosses, we follow to share the gospel, the Good News that God is with us, to live in the resurrection light, indeed, to shine that light to illuminate the path so that others may follow along with us.

When Glory by Jan Richardson

That when glory comes,
we will open our eyes
to see it.

That when glory shows up,

we will let ourselves
be overcome
not by fear
but by the love
it bears.

That when glory shines,
we will bring it
back with us
all the way,
all the way,
all the way down.

Amen

Anthem: [“Jesus on the Mountain Peak”](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

God of justice and peace, in a time of turmoil and extreme divisiveness, we pray that we may have the courage and conviction to always be able to distinguish fact from fiction in order for truth to come alive in us. It is this truth which will give us the freedom from ill-conceived thoughts and acts. Let us cherish this and celebrate this freedom so that we may bring justice to the world around us. Always be that guiding light for us to walk through the darkness of our own making which is littered with misconceptions and divisiveness.

.We are thankful that the pandemic surge has eased up. But continue to help us to be patient and strong in our will to completely overcome this dreaded virus. We also need patience in order to be able to receive the vaccine which will help end the suffering which we have been experiencing. Continue to give the medical community the wisdom and strength to care for those who have been overcome by this life threatening virus.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea,

Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack, and we pray for Joey and Kristin upon the birth of their second child, Owen.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Jesus, Still Lead On"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thought.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291