



Sunday Messages at Scarboro United Church

Transfiguration
(Based on Luke 9:28-36)

March 3, 2019
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Eight days after calling the disciples, and feeding the five thousand, and foretelling his own death and resurrection, and what it will take to follow him - eight days after all that, this happens. The eight days are significant, indicating approximately one week but also this new thing that is happening in Christ. A New Creation. We know what happened on the first six days, and the seventh - God rested. Now, this eighth day, this is Jesus' time, and it is different.

So different that it even changes the people involved. Christ included.

Jesus and a few of his followers (Peter, John, and James) take some time apart to pray. While he is praying, his appearance, in the eyes of the disciples, completely changes. His face looks different, his clothes are so bright as to be blinding. He is transformed.

Not only that, but now Moses and Elijah have joined him. Moses, the giver of the Law, and Elijah, the prophet, and Jesus is among them. On the mountain, the disciples witness the glory of Jesus, and they see the continuity of God's word flowing through the lives of the prophets to that of Christ. He has a place alongside them, in a larger story that includes the history of all God's people. They speak of what he is about to face, what he is to accomplish.

As we stand on the edge of Lent, we know what that entails - his mission, his ministry, his death, and resurrection.

The disciples are "weighed down with sleep" - maybe they've been sleeping, maybe they're dreaming, maybe they're way over tired - but they're certainly awake now. They are lucky enough to witness the true glory of the one that they have been following. They might miss a lot of what he says or does, but they catch this moment. They recognize the importance of this particular moment. Indeed, Peter declares that it is good to be here and that perhaps they should build dwelling places to stay here.

Is it just me, or does anyone else think that this is a strange story?
Is it an historical account? A shared and intense religious experience?
Both? Does it even matter?

As my good friend, minister and author, The Rev. Kira Austin-Young says "I'm not terribly concerned with whether certain things in the Bible ACTuALLY HaPpEnEd, but the Transfiguration is one of those events that is just so weird that I totally think it happened."

I mean, it's certainly possible.

Another wise colleague The Rev. Elizabeth Grasham adds: That “LETS BUILD HOUSES AND STAY HERE FOREVER” is such a delightfully dumb, human thing to say that it has to be real.

I have to agree with both of them.
Who makes this up? And why?

And of course we would ruin the moment by trying to preserve it.

Think of those transformative moments that you have experienced. Those times when you have recognized that something is happening, has happened. Those moments that change you, that change everything.

They might be big or small. A major milestone - a birth, or marriage, or big birthday. A small shift, a change in thinking or a new realization or understanding. Good or bad, maybe a new job, or a lay off, a diagnosis, the end of a relationship, the loss of a loved one. Those things that happen that change who we are and the way that we look to or at the world. We're still the same, but also fundamentally different.

And we might want to stay in that moment as long as possible. That moment that is filled with wonder and awe, amazement at this newness or beauty. Or that moment that is filled with grief and pain, paralyzing us with fear and uncertainty. We know that there has been a shift and that nothing will be the same again.

We have been transformed. Transfigured.

So, what do we do?

We can turn to Christ.

As he was transfigured, he joined the larger story of God's justice and grace for all. He was guided by those who had gone before him. He got to that place with people who supported him and whom he trusted. More than that, he was joined with God. A cloud came and overshadowed them, and frightened them. Because it is scary and overwhelming to be in the presence of God. God speaks, and says to the disciples and to us: This is my child, my beloved, listen to him.

As we are changed, by the world around us, the people in our lives, the events - by God, we join the larger story of God's love in the world. In us. Through us. We join Christ, and the disciples on the mountain top. We have our own holy moments. Where Christ is revealed to us. Where God is with us and names us a beloved, bids us to listen.

Let us listen now.

Change is not going to sit you down and ask if you are ready. Change is not going to knock on your door and hand you notice. Change is not going to hug you in the middle of the night and tell you it can wait.

Change does not wait. Change doesn't care if you aren't ready. It will happen anyway. Change is not always the friend you may want, but it will always know what you need.

It's like Batman, basically.

Courtney Peppernell