

The Feast of the Transfiguration
August 6, 2017
The Rev. Denise Trogdon

Let Your Light Shine

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven, Amen.

If you lived in Galilee when Jesus walked its dusty roads, would you have followed him? We are summoned this day by Jesus, to follow him to a space where we may meet God. This place of meeting is timeless, where there are voices, visions and mystery. His invitation echoes one given to Peter, James and John as he traveled up the mountain. It is a journey of a lifetime, where the road is not straight or without risk. The only thing you need is a willing heart, because this place of encounter is also a place of transformation. We will not return the same.

How will we make this journey? We follow the path that our ancestors traveled, entering into Christ's story. God will make it your story. Notice how it speaks to you. Take in the vision that God offers and reflect upon how this vision is to be realized. Then carry it to the valley below, where we need God's vision most.

As our gospel story begins, let us travel to Galilee, where Jesus has been teaching and performing miracles. We are only part of Jesus' very large following. Of course there are his disciples, who have left their lives behind to serve him. There are those in power who oppose him, who fear his growing presence. Already they are scheming to put an end to his teachings and his life. And there are those who stand on the periphery, listening, evaluating. Who is this man? What is this kingdom of God? Finally, there are those who only hear of Jesus, who are poor or oppressed, who wait in hope that his message is meant for them. Where are you standing in the crowd?

Let's move closer. We are in the district of Caesarea Philippi where Jesus has fed and healed the multitudes. Thousands clamor for just one touch, one word from this prophet. It is time for Jesus to retreat to the mountain to pray. He invites his most trusted companions to come along. Jesus beckons us to follow.

As they approach the mountaintop, in front of their eyes, Jesus is transfigured. His face shines like the sun and his clothes become dazzling white. It is a white so bright it is almost blinding. In that disoriented moment, Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. Moses was the keeper of the law, whose face also shone when he encountered God on the mountain. Elijah, the prophet, was to return before the coming Messiah. We see Jesus standing with the symbols of law and prophet. His shining presence seems to be of another world.

Then a heavenly voice comes from a cloud that overshadows the gathering, "This is my son, the beloved, Listen to him." In homage, Peter wants to create a dwelling place, for surely in the midst of God's awesome presence, they stand on holy ground. But they are not meant to stay upon the mountain. Have the disciples been given a foretaste of the resurrection? Is this a revelation of glory? All they have seen will inspire their work in the world.

This powerful and mystical narrative has been characterized as the revelation of the divinity of Jesus and is celebrated as the Feast of the Transfiguration on this day. The transfiguration is a pivotal moment, where human nature meets God, with Jesus as the connecting point between heaven and earth. I am struck by lines at the end of the gospel that say, "and they kept silent and in

those days told no one any of the things they had seen.” Wouldn’t you want to tell everyone of this divine encounter?

In not so dramatic ways this happens to us all the time. God comes to us in the ordinary hopes and challenges of everyday life. But we don’t recognize them as revelation when they unfold in God’s timing. Or we try to tame or organize our experience into something we understand. Like the disciples we don’t fully grasp the mystery of these eternal moments, or if we do, we most likely don’t share these experiences freely. But make no mistake, when we encounter the holy we are changed.

I believe this story has much more to tell us about our journey and the transformative possibilities in the presence of God’s love. Just as Jesus, Peter, James and John descended the mountain, we too, return to our lives and carry with us God’s light and love. When Moses descended the mountain and so too with Jesus, their faces shone, not for their own benefit but for others to see that something happened, something was different. How does the world know you have been touched by Christ? How does your face shine with the light of God’s love?

Our spiritual journey calls us to this transfiguration light within us. The vision we receive is never meant as a private experience of spirituality removed from the public square. It is a vision to carry us down, a glimpse of unimagined possibility at ground level. We know countless examples of Christ’s light transforming those in the bleakest circumstances. That light is to be carried in us to bring hope to others.

As we enter into Christ’s story, and reflect upon its meaning, we see that God’s love is not a distant hope or a voice in the clouds. God’s love is made manifest in us through our lives and our actions. We are to speak of what we have seen and experienced and take with us the light of revelation to our deepest valleys and to the places of mission in the world. A poem written by Jan Richardson taken from her book *Circle of Grace* makes this very point.

Believe me, I know how tempting it is to remain inside this blessing,
to linger where everything is dazzling and clear.

We could build walls around this blessing, put a roof over it.

We could bring in a table, chairs, have the most amazing meals.

We could make a home. We could stay.

But this blessing is built for leaving.

This blessing is made for coming down the mountain.

This blessing wants to be in motion, to travel with you
as you return to level ground.

It will seem strange how quiet this blessing becomes when it returns to earth. It is not shy. It is not afraid. It simply knows how to bide its time, to watch and wait, to discern and pray until the moment comes when it will reveal everything it knows, when it will shine forth with all that it has seen, when it will dazzle with the unforgettable light you have carried all this way.

On this Feast of the transfiguration, I pray that we not only recognize the light that has been given to us but that we would have the courage to take it to others who cannot even imagine that transformation is possible. Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven, Amen.