

Sermon
St. Mary Nanoose Bay
February 11, 2018
Transfiguration Sunday
Mark 9:2-9

Contrary to what the front of your bulletin says, today is Transfiguration Sunday!

And our reading today from Mark stands in the middle of his gospel, the half way mark between Jesus' teachings and healings; and his suffering and death on the cross. So today, is the transition into Lent; into the journey we make with Jesus as he walks towards his death and resurrection.

What a gift we are given today to help light the days ahead of us as we wend our way through the sometimes confusing and dark days of Lent the Transfiguration. Like Peter, James and John, we are invited to witness something beyond description, beyond explanation. With them we see that Jesus is more than mortal, a divine essence is shining through him. And then we hear, that he is beloved of God. And we are encouraged, maybe even instructed, "to listen to him."

This is assurance indeed because he is about to embark on a journey and mission that no one around seemed to understand or appreciate.

So what does this all have to say to us today?

We all have times in our lives that are dark or confusing. Either we don't understand what's going on – we are literally in the dark; or, we feel very alone in our pain or suffering. Sometimes the pain and loneliness and confusion are difficult to separate; and we might also feel angry with God for our situation.

It's important then, to remember the times when we have seen glimpses of the light, when we felt the presence of Jesus, or when we've felt inexplicably supported. These moments of grace help us get through the tough times. They remind us that we are not alone, we have not been deserted, that our feelings can betray us. That God and the divine are beyond our 5 senses.

There's a wonderful line from a Leonard Cohen song: "There is a **crack in everything**. That's how the light gets in."

So many times we turn in on ourselves during on the broken and challenging times in our lives. We forget to look out. And see that the points where we feel broken and bereft are really the places where we've been cracked open and God is able to reach us through our defenses. It seems counter intuitive but it really is in our vulnerability that we are open to grace.

Stop and think for a moment of a time where you felt inexplicable consolation... where you felt, heard or saw the presence of God; that deep knowing that you are cherished and cared for. That as with Jesus on the mountain, God is saying to you, "You are my beloved."

I had an experience about 20+ years ago that I still cannot explain, that continues to astonish, amaze me and to feed me.

My family and I were camping on the Olympic Peninsula. I had gone for a little walk to get a better view of the sunset. As I came to the bluff over the bay, I was stopped in my tracks. The sky was unlike anything I'd ever seen. I didn't know what I was looking at. There was a tapestry of glowing, reflecting jewels rising up from the water; dazzling whites, golds, silvers, pearls; oranges and pinks and peaches. The whole sky was pulsing and moving and vibrating; folding in on itself, then expanding and contracting again. I really don't know how to describe to you what I was seeing. Someone came along the path and I tore my eyes away to greet them and say, "Can you believe this sunset?!" They glanced at the sky and said, "Yeah, nice sunset," and kept walking. That's when I understood that this show was just for me. So I stood for what felt like a very long time just soaking the show in until it suddenly started to fade into a very nice, but rather ordinary sunset. I realized I was cold and headed back to camp, turning several times to see if the divine display had returned. It didn't and the evening quickly became dark. I returned to camp. I didn't talk about my experience because I wouldn't have known what to say. I wanted to ponder it in my heart.

After all these years, I feel comfortable now sharing this experience. I've learned a number of things from it. The main one being that everything we see and hear and experience is unique to

us. We think we all have the same experience but God can use the same thing in a million different ways to reach each person in the way they need to be reached. I thought that sunset was a static thing... that everyone would see it in the same way. But what I realized is that somehow, for some reason, God was speaking to me in that sunset; and what I was seeing was meant for me. And not for that other person who passed me on the path. And maybe for no one else. And that experience continues to feed me all these years later.

The Transfiguration was witnessed by 3 of the disciples; the ones Jesus chose for that occasion.

We need to trust that the experiences we have of mystery or the divine are meant uniquely for us. That to think of God being too busy to connect with our particular selves and our particular needs is not a helpful view. God can speak in an infinite way to an infinite number of people through a seemingly single event.

Which is why other people can't do our spiritual work for us. We have to spend time on our own relationship with God to prepare our eyes, ears and hearts to be able to receive what God longs to give each one of us, specifically.

I read an article once that said most people have had a mystical experience, a feeling or event they could not explain. People have dreams of loved ones who have died that seem as real as day. People have felt surges of energy when touched and prayed for by others. People intuit the experiences or needs of loved ones

from a distance. My father's mother came to "see him" in Indonesia to say goodbye so when he got the cable that she had died, he already knew.

People don't share their experiences of the mystical and wonderful for reasons that are sound and maybe not so sound. If someone is going to ridicule you or try and talk you out of your experience, why would you share it? But if you're discerning, and share your experience with someone who is open and respectful, it can be reassuring and affirming. Because sometimes when we share our stories, like the disciples did about their time with Jesus, we remember who we are, and whose we are. We are reminded of who God is, and why we're here. We remember that we too are beloved. That God is light and love. And that through all that we experience, we are given glimpses of the light.... either directly of God, or through the words and actions of our friends, neighbours, families and even strangers.

And so this Lent, we have the opportunity to remember and hold close the moments and experiences that remind us of the light, to bring forth the parts of us that need exposure to the healing properties of the light, and to be light for each other.

This Lent, I invite you to open your eyes, ears and hearts to receive God's love, trusting that even when you can't feel it, God is near. And I invite you to be light to those who can't remember, or haven't known yet, or who just need a light-bearer for the time being.

Together, we walk towards the suffering and death that Jesus walked towards willingly. Together, we are not alone. Together, we bear each others' burdens, and together we will find new life.

Amen.