

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, February 27, 2022.

“The Transfiguration”

We learned today that God's presence and glory aren't found only on mountain tops, but in the depths of our world and in everyday life... ultimately on the cross.

So, in the midst of an unprovoked War in Ukraine, we gather longing to hear the good news of Jesus for the world. Our prayers are with the Ukrainians and the Russians. There are a lot of hurting people out there... a lot of shock and sadness. Come Lord Jesus.

Jeranna and I read an article this week called “Joy Stealers: Unmasking four thieves that want to rob you of God's joy” Suzanne Eller writes after her daughter was diagnosed with breast cancer, her son was trapped in addiction, and her cancer returned wrote that the first thief that steals our joy is *believing that sadness disappoints God*. She wrote, “God isn't disappointed when we are sad. God not only created us to feel, God also cares about our emotions.” Suzanne at first wanted to hide her emotions and distance from God. But then she realized from John 16:22 when Jesus saw his disciple's sadness as he was about to leave them, “You will have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” She discovered that lamenting to God was a safe place to share her pain. She proclaimed, “God meets us in our sorrows.”

In Luke's version of the transfiguration, it is the only Gospel of the synoptic Gospels where Jesus' transfiguration happens during prayer. Jesus just healed many, fed the 5000 and needed to recharge. He climbed a mountain with his inner circle, Peter, James, and John and entered into prayer. Even Jesus needed sabbath and time to pray. While praying, Jesus was transformed with his face changed and his clothes becoming dazzling white.

Prayer can change things. Prayer can transform us. Oftentimes, the people who are transformed by prayer aren't always the ones we are praying for. It is us. There is something about throwing up your hands in prayer and giving things to God that we can't solve. Prayer

can give us a peace that surpasses all understanding, like Paul says in Philippians.

During the prayer, the disciples then saw Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. I wonder how they knew who it was. Did they have nametags? They were talking about Jesus' departure... which will happen on the cross in Jerusalem.

Peter blurted out, "Master, it is good for us to be here... let us make three dwellings." Peter was having a mountain top experience and wanted to make three tents... or altars... one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. He wanted to commemorate this moment and keep coming back to this mountain to worship. But just as he said this, a cloud overshadowed them. And when clouds come, at least in the Exodus story in the Old Testament, God would speak. Right on cue, when the cloud appeared, the voice of God said, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!" "Listen to him".

Then Moses and Elijah disappeared and they were left with Jesus alone. What do we do when all we have is Jesus?

They didn't stay on the mountain very long. Jesus had a mission to accomplish in Jerusalem. Right after this, Jesus encountered a desperate parent whose son had an evil spirit that gave him seizures. Jesus spoke a word and the evil spirit left the boy. Jesus cares about our emotions and sadness.

What do we take from this story? First of all, we need to listen to Jesus above all else in scripture. Next, I see this as a passing of the torch in the Bible. Here you have Moses, who represents the law... the Torah... the first 5 books of the Old Testament, and Elijah, who represents the prophets. In the end, we left with Jesus and the voice of God saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen one, listen to him." In this text, Jesus is the fulfillment of all scripture. He is the word made flesh. Whenever we read the Bible, we can't leave Jesus out of the equation.

Finally, you can't blame Peter for wanting to stay on the mountain and bask in the Glory? But Jesus' true glory will be found on the

cross. God will be found fully in a hurting world. God's glory will take the via dolorosa, the way of suffering, to Golgotha.

The truth is, things don't always go according to our plans. We aren't always great. We live most of our lives in the ordinary mundane tasks of life. God can be found there too. We suffer various trials. We lose our jobs, we experience grief and loss, we have addictions, we keep making the same mistakes.

But Jesus came down the mountain as a human for real humans. Jesus cares more about you and me than saving his own life. His grace is sufficient for us.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday... the beginning of Lent. We will gather for worship and enter into an extended period of confession. Then we will receive an ash cross on our foreheads to remind us that we are dead in our sins.

It is sometimes out of great suffering and trials that we change. If we don't face adversity, how will we ever grow and make the changes we need to? Come and journey with Jesus to the cross during Lent. May God transform your pain and suffering into the joy of resurrection on Easter.