**2/19/23**

**Soup**

**Matthew 17:1-9**

Yesterday was a rather interesting day. It was a day that we got to connect with the community yet again in various ways, shapes, and forms. 41 social service agencies descended upon Tabernacle United Methodist Church for a Community Resource Day. Those groups, including Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, were there to provide help and hope.

When we arrived we checked in and carried all of our stuff into the building. We put our table cloth on, we put our literature and business cards out and we put our pocket crosses and cards out. We also put out various soups on the table for folks to have something nourishing to take along with them and prepare. We transformed our area into one of many service stations. As we got ready physically and mentally for folks to start arriving we got to connect with other professionals and agencies to build a stronger bond with our fellow servants in the community and further affirm our continued commitment to serve.

Once people in need from the community started to arrive we provided support and information. We educated people on what is out there, and what they might not realize is available to them in their very own communities. We acted as his hands and feet. We shared the Gospel. We even connected others back to a church family, or shared our bond together as Christians. We shined God’s light in hopes of transforming and transfiguring those that are struggling, defeated, and down and out in any way to be reminded of who they are and whose they are. We reminded them that the victory has already been achieved. We were yet again reminded that as servants we need to continually step up and step out and help the least of these, just as our Lord and Savior has done time and time again.

As we planned for this event Bonnie, myself, and Heather had various ideas of what we could give out and what we could do. As I am sure many of you realize that with any event there is plenty of preparation whether you are the organizer or just an attendee. What I thought was even cooler is that I received an email just the day prior to the event really confirming our plans. Because, as you all know, our God has a certain way of stepping up and stepping out to reaffirm his servants efforts as well. So, let me share this email with you from Josiah Haken at City Relief.

“A few years ago, while I was standing in our soup line to get a meal for one of our guests who needed to sit and rest, I struck up a conversation with the man standing next to me. I asked him if he lived in the neighborhood and he replied, "I actually work in the post office right over there. I have three kids I'm putting through school and once I feed them there's nothing left over for me, so this will be my meal for the day." (3)

“The cheapest “meal” in New York City that I can think of is a slice of pizza and a drink. If that's all you’re getting, you will still end up spending at least $5 per day. A single ride on the subway costs $2.75. That means purchasing a meal could actually cost you the transportation money you need just to get to work and back, or any number of basic necessities.” (3)

“I think it's hard for most of us to imagine the emotional and physical toll of being forced to choose between two things you absolutely need to survive, much less thrive. Yet for many of our guests at City Relief, it is their reality.” (3)

“Providing soup to our outreach guests not only provides nourishment, it also creates the opportunity for community and connection. Many people will linger at outreach to enjoy their soup and strike up a conversation with a staff member or volunteer. These conversations often lead to opportunities for prayer, encouragement, and connections to other critical services.” (3)

Soup, just something as simple as soup is what stopped folks long enough at our table to have a discussion yesterday too! It allowed us to connect. It provided that icebreaker that we so desperately need at times.

Alright, enough about yesterday. Let’s focus on the meat and potatoes of today, and our Gospel Reading. Now, we come into this last Sunday after Epiphany and get a rather interesting story don’t we? We get a story that is somewhat easy to understand, and yet very complex or even hard to understand at times too. Now, why is that you might ask? I mean isn’t it pretty normal to go hang out with a buddy, and maybe go up on a hill? There is definitely nothing really out of the ordinary there for sure. However, it is the events that happened after that which led to the Apostles, and even our confusion at times.

It is not every day that more people just miraculously appear out of nowhere up on a hill. We would have seen them coming wouldn’t we? I mean we had to walk up that very same hill, and we were there before them. So, how the heck did they just all of a sudden get there? Was there a hidden elevator that we missed? Was there a hidden staircase? Did they get transported in by a helicopter or something, and we just missed it because we were too caught up talking with our buddy?

More importantly, it is not every day that the very individuals that end up showing up to the hang out are vital figures in the history of Christianity! Plus, it is definitely not every day that our buddy just starts glowing like he stepped in some radioactive fluid or something! Then, as if we do not have enough weird and overwhelming stuff going on, the voice of God comes booming down from the clouds and tells us “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (1)

So, now that we are awestruck, confused, and elated we somehow have to keep all of this a secret! We can’t go back and share this awesome event with our crew. We got to hold onto this experience and “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” (1) We more often than not lose out on the concept of there being a time and place for everything. No matter how excited or intent we are on sharing something, we need to remember and respect the purpose and point of that which we were blessed to experience.

So, now that I have kind of summed up the Gospel and admittedly did so in a little goofy of a way so we could relate a little bit more, I would guess we are all pretty comfortable to move on with our worship service right? Aha! Not, so fast! There are a few points that I would like to highlight from my research that I think are valuable before we continue on with our days and lives, and go fellowship with one another at our coffee hour.

So, when we look at the tricky term Transfiguration itself we learn from Wikipedia that “in Christian teachings, the transfiguration is a pivotal moment, and the setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place of the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth.” (2) “The Transfiguration of our Lord is an apt portion of Scripture to consider before Lent begins since we get a sneak-peek at the resurrection before we head into the season of repentance that leads to Easter.” (4) We also learn that “He permitted those three mentioned apostles specially to see this appearance, in order to guard them against the coming offense of his cross and crucifixion. It served to strengthen their faith in Christ, that he was the Son of the living God, and that his kingdom must be regarded in a spiritual sense.” (4)

If we go a little deeper and explore things we learn that “… the Greek word for transfiguration comes from the root word metamorfoze … sound familiar? It’s where we get our English word METAMORPHSIS from. Friends, God’s plan, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, is not only the metamorphosis or transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain that day, where the apostles saw Jesus fulfill everything that Moses and Elijah had been preparing along the way, but because of Jesus’ transfiguration, Jesus’ death and resurrection, Jesus’ fulfilling everything God had been promising, we are transfigured from sinner to saint.” (5)

We all know from Bible Stories that we have heard or read over the years that “Moses of course was the great Law giver who had his own encounter on a mountain. Just like Jesus went up on the mountain to be transfigured, Moses went up on the mountain and had his encounter with God, where he received the Ten Commandments—the Decalogue. And Elijah, who’s this guy? Elijah was what I would call to be Israel’s ultimate prophet. He was so good in fact, that he never died. God instead whisked him up into heaven on a chariot of fire.” (5)

Let me add some insight from Martin Luther here too! He elaborates that “Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus teaches: “…that they had never really died, and that there is yet another life, besides the earthly life, from which they were transferred.” (4) “Luther also sees Moses and Elijah appearing “in order to testify that Jesus Christ is truly the promised Messiah, according to the law (i.e. Moses), and the prophets, (i.e. Elias),” his concentration here is on the comfort of the life to come, the hope that the faithful have after this present life of labor is over. Just as the Transfiguration testifies to this truth for Moses and Elijah, so too is this your hope, to be transferred from this life of sorrow to life immortal with Jesus and all the saints.” (4)

We also must realize that “… it’s important to note that Jesus didn’t come along because so many other Jewish prophets had failed before Him, like say Abraham, Moses, and even Elijah. Jesus wasn’t God’s “contingency plan” as it were, a plan “B” after “plan A” failed. No, instead, what we see here is that Jesus is the culmination, the end-result of EVERYTHING God had been doing for Israel for thousands of years now.” (5)

“Jesus isn’t something new that God is doing to save these people that keep messing up over and over again. Jesus is the continuation of God’s work that we read and see promised all the way through the Old Testament.” (5)

“This moment on the mountain was not a moment of “Transformation” but Transfiguration. Transformation is something that happens on the outside. Transfiguration is something that happens on the inside. Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit is in the business of “transfiguration”, changing us from the inside. We are even reminded of this as Paul writes: “It is not I who live but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20) The Transfiguration event reminds us that Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God who restored me and you who have been alienated by sin, to intimacy, friendship, harmony and peace.” (6)

Amen.

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

Sunday, February 19, 2023

Transfiguration of Our Lord

Last Sunday after Epiphany

Year A

(2) Wikipedia.com

Transfiguration of Jesus

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Transfiguration of Christ"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration\_of\_Jesus

(3) Josiah Haken

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“How does a cup of soup create financial margin for our guests?”

(4) https://lutheranreformation.org/theology/luther-on-the-transfiguration/

Luther on the Transfiguration

POSTED FEBRUARY 26, 2017

by Rev. Stephen Preus

(5) SundaysandSeasons.com

Jesus...still Transfiguring You And Me Today

Contributed by Stephen Becker on Jan 26, 2008

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9

Denomination: Lutheran

(6) SundaysandSeasons.com

A Mountain Top Experience

Contributed by Clarence Eisberg on Feb 15, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 17:3-18, Luke 9:18-36

Denomination: Lutheran

**Matthew 17:1-9**

Shortly before he enters Jerusalem, where he will be crucified, Jesus is revealed to Peter, James, and John in a mountaintop experience of divine glory called the transfiguration.

1Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” 6When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” 8And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

 9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”