

Church of the Divine Love.

Sermon Sunday February 11, 2024

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

There are times in our lives when we look around and wonder, is this all there is? Sometimes it's just a passing question, other times it's for a season. We look at our life, our circumstances, and we want more. There is a restlessness, a searching, and longing for something else. Some call it a mid-life crisis. It can make us do crazy things – this searching and seeking. We get a new job, a new car, a new relationship. Maybe we take up a new hobby, go on a trip, or work extra hours. But not much changes.

It is not about the circumstances of life. It's about us. The restlessness, the desire for something more, generally means that we have been living life at the shallow end of the pool. Life and relationships have become superficial. We have been skimming across the surface. In some ways life at the surface is easier, more efficient, encouraged and rewarded by much of the world today. It fails, however, to see and experience that the world is already transfigured and creation is filled with the divine light. Life on the surface keeps us judging the circumstances. We look at our circumstances as a picture. If it is pretty, pleasing, and shows us what we want to see then God is good and life is as it should be. When we don't see what we want then we often look for a new picture. The restless searching, the longing for more, the desire for meaning is not, however, usually answered by changed circumstances. The answer is found in depth, intimacy, and the vulnerability of the interior journey.

We do not need to see new things. We need to see the same old things with new eyes. We do not need to hear a different voice. We need to hear the same old voice with different ears. We do not need to escape the circumstances of our life. We need to be more fully present to those circumstances. When this happens, life is no longer lived at the surface. These are the transfigured moments, moments when the picture of our life has become a window into a new world and we come face to face with the glory of God. Most of us, I think, seek God in the circumstances of life. We want God to show up, be present, and do something. This is the God who does. This is the God described in Mark's gospel up to the point of today's reading. We might think about this as the first part of the spiritual journey. It is the journey of discovering God in the circumstances. This is what the disciples have been doing. They have seen Jesus cast out demons, heal Peter's mother-in-law, and cure the sick of Capernaum. He's cleansed the leper and made a withered hand new and strong. Paralytics now walk, the blind see, and thousands are fed. This is the God about whom people talk, the God that gets likes and shares on Facebook.

At some point we must, however, begin to discover the God who is beyond the circumstances. This is the God who is. This is the second part of the spiritual journey. Jesus is leading Peter, James and John, up the mountain to discover the God who is beyond circumstances. Here their pictures of life's circumstances will become windows by which they move into the depths of God's life, God's light, and God's love. There on the mountain they saw Jesus transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such

as no one on earth could bleach them. The cloud overshadowed them and the father's voice spoke of his beloved son. Peter wants to build dwelling places. He wants to frame Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. "It is good for us to be here," he says. He wants to preserve it. He wants to take a picture. Pictures, however, are static. On the Mount of Transfiguration our pictures of life's circumstances become windows through which we step into a new world, a new way of seeing, a new way of hearing, and new way of being. That's what happened for Peter, James, and John. Jesus did not suddenly light up and become something he was not. No, their eyes were healed and opened so they could see Jesus as he had always been. The voice in the cloud was not new. Their ears were opened and they heard the voice that has never ceased speaking from the beginning. The transfiguration is as much about them as it is Jesus. Whenever our picture of life's circumstances becomes a window into new life we stand in a transfigured moment. Circumstances haven't changed. We have changed and that seems to change everything.

Those transfigured moments are all around. Every one of us could tell a story about stepping back from the picture of our life, seeing with new eyes, listening with different ears, and discovering a window that opened into another world and another way of being. Maybe it was the day you revealed to another person the secret you had carried for years. In telling the secret the picture of your life as one of guilt and shame became an open window through which you stepped. The darkness gave way to light, the chains fell off, and forgiveness overcame sin. Maybe you will never forget the day you buried a member of your family. You came home from the cemetery and you were lying on the bed. You could not see him or her but he or she was present. The picture of death and loss had become a window through you stepped into the mystery of life, hope, and resurrection. Think about the day you held your child for the very first time. Yes, it was a picture of a newborn but it was also a window through which you stepped and were forever changed. You experienced a new vocation as a parent. You became a part of the mystery of creation. The Lord's glory surely shone as much in your hands that day as it did on the mount of transfiguration 2000 years ago.

I remember speaking with a woman who was dying. Together we talked, laughed, cried, and sat in silence. She said she had had some experiences. She had visions and heard voices. Is that real? Is it normal? Yes, absolutely. The picture of her life as one of cancer, pain, and suffering had become an open window through which she stepped. She began to understand that in the midst of her cancer she was already being healed. "There is so much more going on than we usually see or know, she said. The tears and fear are real but just as real is the voice that says to her, "Oh my daughter, my beloved, you are already ok." Those windows are everywhere if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. We often want to go back to those transfigured moments. We are tempted to build dwellings places for those moments. Booths, dwelling places, will only keep us in the past. To the extent we cling to the past we close ourselves to the future God offers. So, Jesus, Peter, James, and John came back down the mountain. They could not stay there but neither did they leave the mountain. They took it with them. It is what would carry them through the passion and crucifixion to the resurrection.

Transfigured moments change us, sustain us, prepare us, encourage us, and guide us into the future regardless of the circumstances we face. They show us who we are. We are the transfigured people of God. Open your eyes and see a transfigured world. Open your ears and hear the transfiguring voice. Open your heart and become a transfigured life. The bright light of the Transfiguration affirms life, a light that shines ahead into Lent to keep that season in perspective, never without hope and confidence. This light speaks a promise that God is here. And that God is knowable. God seeks relationship. Because God is life. And as we walk in the light, we can shine this little light of mine" into the darkness. **Amen!**