

Luke 9:28-43

George Matheson, a nearly blind Scottish preacher, lived with his sister who was also his secretary and closest companion. On the night of her wedding, he was most likely feeling abandoned and rejected. In his distress he felt as though the words were given to him as he wrote the hymn "O Love, that wilt not let me go." The first verse speaks of the love that we receive from Christ Jesus: O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, That in Thine ocean depths its flow May richer, fuller be. It is amazing how in the depths of his sorrow Matheson could write such a powerful witness to the love of Jesus.

Can you imagine how the disciples, Peter, James and John must have felt when they stood in the presence of the transfigured Jesus? They went up the mountain with Jesus to pray. While they were with Jesus his face changed, and his entire body began to glow brighter than any lightening they had ever seen. Think about lightening strikes... If they lasted longer than a few seconds, the lightning is so bright we would not be able to look at it. And in the brightness of the light Moses and Elijah, the great prophets of old, appeared. No one told the disciples who these men were, they just knew their identities. The three of them, Jesus, Moses and Elijah, discussed how Jesus would be leaving the earth in the near future. Moses and Elijah were getting ready to depart when Peter, not wanting this wonderful moment to end, spoke up, "Can't we build shelters so they can stay with us?" Peter, even though he realized that the two prophets could not stay on earth, did not want this special time to end. Haven't you been in that situation before, where you were so enthralled that you didn't want the time to be over?

As he spoke a cloud covered the three disciples and a voice boomed out of the cloud, "This is my Son! My chosen! Listen to him!" When the cloud lifted Jesus was standing there alone. The disciples told no one about what had happened to them. Who would have believed it?

Jesus was transfigured in front of their eyes. They had been in the presence of God, and had witnessed something they could not gaze upon. It was like the face of Moses when he came down from the mountain where he was in the presence of God; he glowed so brightly he had to wear a veil in order for the Israelites to look at his face. Moses *and* the disciples were in the presence of the awesome God where they felt all the glory and majesty, a power that will not let go. This is what it is like to know Jesus, the awesome person of the triune God who went to the cross for us. Because of this we cannot take Jesus for granted. Jesus, who is so awesome, powerful, and even frightful at times, cannot be taken for granted. But we do. Here's a story about Jess...

Jess had a tough week. Jess worked all week, even Saturday. On Sunday Jess could not get out of bed for church. Of course there was no time to attend Bible study during the week, and especially not that committee meeting that Jess thought was such a waste of time. The church, Jesus' mission, was not all that important to Jess who has no fear of the awesome, majestic power of the love of Jesus.

Here we are in worship this morning, we may have had just as tough a week as Jess did, but we're here. Yet, are we really here? Too often we can be sitting in the pew, but our mind is on our grocery list, or when is winter going to be over, or, I know bigfoot isn't real, but is there a slim possibility he exists? Here the word of God is being proclaimed, yet our mind is missing the awesome majesty of his power. It seems as if the old hymn may not be true: The love of God has let us go; we can get away.

Here are a couple more examples of people missing God's majesty: Pat is a 15 year old who has decided that alcohol, drugs and being sexually active is the life Pat wants to live. And then there's the harried businessman or the career woman. The profit margin has to be upgraded no matter *what* it takes. A little slight of the pen won't hurt. Besides, no one will know. Except God! God knows, because God is right there on the spot. Martin Luther wrote that God sees us but we do not see God. God is everywhere! I'm not pretending to know how, but God is present everywhere.

Most of the time we are not aware of God's majestic presence. We may claim that God is beyond our vision and we cannot see God, but that excuse is no longer valid since Jesus came to earth. Since the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop in front of his three disciples, we know that Jesus is God on earth. Jesus has been revealed as the eternal, omnipotent God. The glory of God has walked on earth! We are reminded by the transfiguration that God has walked the earth, and that God with all majesty is still among us, even today.

It makes a great deal of sense to celebrate the transfiguration just before the Lenten season. As we walk with Jesus, as we journey with Christ to the cross, as we experience all his trials and tribulations, the agony he experienced after his betrayal and arrest, we are reminded of this supreme, all powerful love that will not let us go. Martin Luther, in one of his sermons said that we should have a fear of God so that we are not prideful or presumptuous. This fear isn't the type of fear we would have of a tyrant, but it is a healthy fear, so that there is respect. The Holy Spirit does not want us to fear in such a way that we are overwhelmed by fear and despair, but in a way that brings respect of God's sovereignty and allows us to rejoice in God's love for us. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, p 75). This is a love that will not let us go.

This awesome love of God will not let us go when we stray but works to bring us back. It has a soft side, a love that only seeks love in return. Awesome and powerful as this love is, Jesus comes to us, draws us near, as would a loving friend or brother. Any worries about fear, anger or meaninglessness are sure to vanish in his presence.

If for any reason you are tempted to forget about Jesus this week remember his transfiguration. Remember how awesome Jesus is displayed in all his glory. Remember how powerful Jesus is that he loves with a love that will not let you go. Even as he is heading to the cross his love for you is so powerful. All he wants from you is your full attention. All he wants from you is knowing that you put him above everything else in your life and you make no decisions without first consulting him. In the depths of his love where we are enveloped with a love that will not let us go we cannot help but be changed. A love like this is too good to be missed.
All glory be to God.