

Home Service for February 14, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*May the brightness of God shine around us, within us, and through us.*

Call to Worship:

The light of God is shining, shining around and within. The voice of God is calling, calling not just from ancient texts, but from here and now. The love of God is with us, flowing around and within us.

Opening Prayer:

O Holy One, on mountaintops and valley floors you reveal to us the light of your love. Our hearts desire is to bask in the amazing glory of the divine presence. With each encounter we are changed and transformed. Draw us nearer that we might receive a double portion of your Holy Spirit. Help us, O Holy One, to live our lives as a reflection of divine glory. May we walk among our brothers and sister as a blessing, bearing light into dark places, hope to displace despair, and love that casts out hate. Our world is hurting and we need the followers of Jesus to follow more closely. Maybe then we will hear your voice speaking to us and saying, . . . “listen to my Child, the Beloved!” Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Shine upon us with your grace, that we might see what frightens us and face what threatens us. Flow through us with your mercy, that we might sense your presence, even when we have run away, and that we may know your love, even when we feel most unlovable. Abide in us with your love, for your love claims us and makes us whole. Amen

Words of Assurance

*Even in the darkest of times, the light of God is shining. The light of Christ’s love and mercy are shining now, brightening our lives with mercy and grace.*

Read Psalm 50:1-6:

The Mighty One, God, the LORD,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.

<sup>2</sup> From Zion, perfect in beauty,  
God shines forth.

<sup>3</sup> Our God comes  
and will not be silent;  
a fire devours before him,  
and around him a tempest rages.

<sup>4</sup> He summons the heavens above,  
and the earth, that he may judge his people:

<sup>5</sup> “Gather to me this consecrated people,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”

<sup>6</sup> And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,  
for he is a God of justice.

Prayers of the People:

We worship you, O God, with songs of praise. We worship you with words of prayer and with ears that listen for you to speak your saving truth into our lives. We worship you in the silent spaces where we struggle for hope and for courage. We long for a glimpse of your glory: the glory that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it; the glory that touches lives with a beauty so holy that it heals the wounded soul; the glory that gives strength to the weary.

We, who stumble and fall so often, worship you, longing for your light to shine upon us. Dazzle us with your holy love, draw us into your purifying presence, speak to us your transforming truth. Then, grant us grace to live every moment changed by such glory—daring to live with hope and courage and love reflecting the life of Jesus, through whom your glory shines in the most unexpected ways. Amen.

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: 2 Kings 2:1-12

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

<sup>3</sup> The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "so be quiet."

<sup>4</sup> Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup> The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "so be quiet."

<sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

<sup>7</sup> Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. <sup>8</sup> Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup> When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"

"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

<sup>10</sup> "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not."

<sup>11</sup> As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. <sup>12</sup> Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,”<sup>[a]</sup> made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 9:2-9

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

## Message

Our World can often be a dark place; senseless acts of violence, hatred, abuse, selfishness, greed and anger. A saving Light appears that brings genuine peace and lasting purpose. Jesus is the Light in the darkness of this world and in our personal lives. That light illuminates forgiveness and God's care and love for each of us. Throughout the Bible, Light plays an important role in God's story; in His speaking to us, if you take time to think about it. Let us look at some of those times.

In the beginning God said "Let there be Light." God spoke, and time began. The infinite darkness was instantly shattered by light. God spoke and the universe and everything in it came into existence including the first two people who God had carefully, personally crafted with his own hands. The human race began. Moses saw the light on his many trips up Mt. Sinai to receive God's laws.

The same God, but different occasion. "Let there be light." This time I'm not talking about the creation of physical light. I'm talking about the light of rescue that God promised to provide. God was providing a saving light for a world lost in the darkness of sin and without any hope of rescue on its own. This was what God first promised to those first sinners, Adam and Eve, a promise that burned brightly throughout the centuries, until at the perfect time and place, 2000 years ago, in Bethlehem God announced, "Let there be light!" and the promised Light of salvation, Jesus, entered the darkness of this world.

Today, we heard about Peter, James, and John, disciples of Jesus, saw the light on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus' appearance was changed before their very eyes. There is also when the Apostle Paul had literally seen the light on a business trip to Damascus. Paul's business before he became an apostle was to persecute Christians. Paul thought that he was doing God's will by rounding up Christians and threatening them with execution if they didn't turn away from their faith in Jesus. While Paul seriously thought he had already seen the light and was doing a God-pleasing thing, in reality he was fighting against God. But God had a plan for Paul and sent the light to that exact location on the road to Damascus.

What does it mean when people ask, "Have you seen the light"? While I can't speak for everyone who asks that question, I do know what the Apostle Paul meant when he talked about "the light" in our Epistle Lesson. The light, according to Paul, is the life-saving truth found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So have you seen the light, have you experienced your eyes being opened so that you may bask in its

warmth and comfort? Where can we find the light and learn what God wants today? By stepping into the light of God's Word, the Bible.

Today, I want to look at the light and the experience of three disciples, Peter, James and John, and how it relates to our lives. I want to talk about mountain top experiences. Jesus takes the three disciples to a high mountain top and Jesus became transfigured. He is changed. And then two figures appear with Him, Moses and Elijah. They speak to one another.

It is a grand experience. Peter wants to keep the experience alive by building three booths, or places of worship, so they could worship Jesus, Moses and Elijah. It was so grand of an experience.

Then a voice comes out of a cloud and says: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." God spoke to these disciples telling them once again that Jesus was His beloved Son. These words were similar to the words spoken at Jesus' Baptism, remember what they said, Mark 1:11 "and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." Notice that in the words on the mountain, God adds one request he says for the disciples to listen to Jesus.

Then it was all over. Jesus told them not to tell anyone and they were to go back down the mountain. There was no time to stay there and worship as Peter wanted. There was no time to stay isolated from the cares of the world below. No, they had to go back down the mountain. The disciples wanted the mountain top experience to last; they wanted this special religious experience to last. They wanted to stay on top of the mountain away from the cares of the world. They did not want to venture out into the darkness. They wanted to remain safe on top of the mountain. I imagine that this experience did give the disciples some confidence in their decision to follow Jesus. They saw the religious people from the past talking with Jesus; they heard the voice of God talking to them about Jesus.

Jesus did not want to stay on top of the mountain. He said no to continuation of the mountain top experience. He is saying that it is good while it lasted, but we must not stay.

Jesus said no. They must go back down. They must go back down and continue His ministry. They must go back down and encounter all the brokenness of this world and bring a measure of grace to it.

The disciples were told by God to listen to Jesus. So they had no choice but to go back down. They had to go back down the mountain to the people who were

demanding to see Jesus. They had to go to the people who were experiencing the brokenness of this world. They went down so that Jesus could give a measure of His grace to those who were hurting.

Jesus wanted the disciples to have a faith that was not just a mountain top faith, but a faith that endured climbing the mountains, descending the mountains and at times living in the valleys of the mountains.

Many times we as Christians want that type of mountain top experience in our faith life, too and sometimes we want it all the time. We want that glorious feeling of being with Christ. We like the highs of faith, but want to stay away from the lows.

I once read in a devotional: Sometimes, the greatest faith is not the mountain moving kind of faith at all. Sometimes the greatest test of faith comes when you speak to the mountain and it doesn't move. That is when God may speak to you and say, "I'm not going to move this mountain, but I will give you the strength to climb it." I believe this is what Jesus was saying to us today and the disciples that day on the mountain top.

Paul reminds us that light shines out of darkness, and that our deepest knowledge comes from the light shining through our hearts. This is the transformative power of God's presence, not just surrounding us, but abiding within us. Paul assures us that God is working for us to believe the truth, stated in the last verse of our text: "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The same powerful Word God used to create light at the beginning of the world is what He is using now to create the light of faith in your heart. You have heard God's Word. You are standing in the light. Don't close your eyes to it. Amen.

Benediction:

*My sisters, brothers, and siblings in Christ, our worship never ends, it must be lived. Go forth from this place to be the visible, tangible love of God in a fractured and troubled world. And as you do so, know that the peace of Christ dwells within you and works through you to bring all of creation into the fullness of God. Amen.*