

Home Service for February 11, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

No Home Service next week.

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

The mighty one speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. God calls to the heavens and to the earth, "Gather to me my faithful ones."

Call to Worship:

Healing is what God desires. Healing is what God does. Come, see and hear that God's promises are still real. Come, see and hear that God is alive and well and living here today and every day in our hearts.

Opening Prayer:

Mighty God, stay with us always, not only in our worship, but as we share the risk and challenge of living our faith. By your powerful Spirit, turn our fear to courage. Your glory shines in the face of Christ; shine in our hearts and lives. May your name be praise, glorious God! Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient Lord, you know how accustomed we are to "magic" tricks. Our spirits and our senses get fooled easily. We would be just like the disciples, at first not believing what we were seeing and then wanting to make a monument to the event. Thank you for being so patient with us. Forgive us when we get so wrapped up in the moment that we don't take time enough to understand its significance. Help us pause, reflect, think, and thank you for the blessings of unexpected revelations. Give us wisdom and strength to be your disciples, proclaiming your transforming love to all people. AMEN.

Words of Assurance:

To you the light of love and ministry has been revealed. Rejoice! You have been blessed by God to be witnesses; to proclaim God's love to all. Be at peace! AMEN.

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.

² From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.

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

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

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

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

Prayers of the People:

Lord of infinite mercy, we would make a Broadway production of this Transfiguration event because we would not take the time to understand its significance for our lives. We are in such a hurry to memorialize everything that the power and meaning of the event become pale or altered in our memories. Help us look at Jesus with new eyes, those eyes that see him in light of the witness of the ages; that see Jesus as the One who comes to set people free, to heal, to bring hope and peace. At the same time we bring names of those who need Your care and love in their lives, we bring them with faith that You will answer their needs in Your own way and time which is the best way. Make us ready to become faithful disciples, rather than remaining dazzled by the mountaintop experience. Give us strength and courage this day to witness to Jesus' love by the many deeds of mercy and justice we can offer in his name. For we offer ourselves, imperfect, but willing, to serve. 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 Old Testament 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. ² 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.

³ 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.”

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.”

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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. ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ “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.”

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ⁴The 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. ⁵For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"^[a] 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. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵Peter 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." ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

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

⁹As 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

Since the days of Moses and the commandments, God's people have valued mountaintop experiences, those seasons when our spirits have been lifted and our hearts encouraged. We long to continue in the presence of God. Well today, we find ourselves on a mountain top with Jesus along with three of his disciples; Peter, James and John. To add to the experience, Moses and Elijah join them on that mountain top.

We often take note of the seasons that change. The signs can be very obvious, but not always. This past couple of weeks has provided days that seemed like spring was coming. But we know that a sudden snowstorm or frigid temperatures will remind us that we are still in the midst of winter. These are signs we do not ignore. Today, the church is a celebration of the changing of church seasons. We have

been in Epiphany where Jesus is clearly seen as the Light of the world, God's own Son. Transfiguration marks the move from the Epiphany season into the season of Lent. During these 40 days before Easter we see Jesus as the Son of man. Jesus' glory is moved to the background as his humility comes to the foreground. All of this we are privileged to learn and know as we gather around the word of God revealed in the Bible. We are privileged to learn God's word by reading, studying, and gathering for worship. We gather around the word of the Lord to learn: What JESUS' TRANFIGURATION IS REVEALING.

Life is filled with peaks and valleys. A peak is something that happens in your life, something great, something to celebrate and remember. During those moments, it's easy to be a Christian. "God is good," you think to yourself. There's no doubt in your mind that God is blessing you, but there are the valleys too. Those difficult moments when it's more difficult to be a Christian. When you're in the valley, it's hard to say, "God is good." Sometimes your faith is shaken. There's some doubt there, that God is blessing you and those around you.

The disciples of Jesus Christ had no idea that they were about to enter a valley, that they were about to go through a low-point with Christ. It was easy to be a disciple of Jesus at that time. There was no doubt that this was the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The disciples were experiencing one high-point after another with Jesus. But right around the corner loomed the valley of the shadow of death. The crowds would soon turn against Jesus. He'd be betrayed, and arrested, and tortured, and publicly condemned, and executed in the most shameful way known to man at that time. The disciples would be filled with fear and doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. Soon, it would be very difficult to be a disciple of Christ. A deep, dark valley was right around the corner, and the disciples had no idea.

And so that is why today, Jesus takes them to the top of a mountain, and he does this to strengthen them for the difficult road ahead. Today, it is good for us to go on this journey with those disciples too, and experience with them this high point, for two reasons. First of all, it prepares us for Lent. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is this Wednesday. Up until this time, you have heard about Christ, how powerful he is, what a great teacher he is, how he is, without a doubt, the Son of God and Savior of the World. But now it is Lent, that time in the church year when Jesus descends into the valley of the shadow of death. You're going to hear about how he was rejected. How he was weak. How he suffered and died for the sins of the world. These next six weeks, we are going to walk with Jesus, into that valley, and see those difficult moments. This mountain-top experience we hear about today is supposed to prepare us for the valley ahead.

It also prepares us for something else, our own personal valleys. As we see Jesus glorified here today, it prepares us when we go through our own difficult moments. May God bless you this day, as you stand with those disciples and see Jesus reveal his glory; may your faith be strengthened, for the days ahead, as you prepare for all the different peaks and valleys in your life.

The disciples experienced “a bright cloud appearing and enveloping them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’” The disciples were surrounded by a bright fog, and then they heard the voice of God the Father himself. It must have been an amazing thing, to hear the voice of God the Father. They heard the Father say that Jesus really is his Son, that he was loved, and that they should listen to him. This was important for those disciples to hear. Soon, people would be saying that Jesus was not the Son of God. It would seem as though God the Father didn’t love Christ. But here it is clear; this is the true Son of God, loved by the Father, whose words are words that we should listen to.

And then, just as quickly as it began, the moment ended: “Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.” This was a high point for those disciples, they saw Christ in all his glory, surrounded by the prophets, and acclaimed by God the Father. This would help and strengthen them as they continued on with Jesus into the valley of the shadow of death.

And this should help us as well. As we enter the Lenten season this Wednesday, we will watch Jesus battle with Satan, and we will see him eventually become weak and die. Here today we are reminded that Jesus is the Son of God, the holy one spoken of by the prophets. Although he will be suffering and dying, he is still God and Savior, doing these things to win for us our salvation. This also helps us as we go through our own personal peaks and valleys in life. It is good for us to be here, because here we are reminded of our Savior’s glory, and who he really is.

The disciples needed to climb a mountain to see this. Today, God’s Word is our mountain to climb. Every time you come here, to church, and you hear the Word of God, you have climbed the mountain. Here, you see Christ, who has taken your sins away on the cross and who has risen from the dead. Here you catch a glimpse of his glory, even if it’s just for a moment. Sunday morning worship, the Word of God, this is your mountain top. It is good for you to be here, because this is where you are strengthened for the days ahead, for all the peaks and valleys that are around the corner for you.

Transfiguration is a special day for believers. Transfiguration marks a change of seasons. We move from the season of Epiphany; Jesus as God’s son and light of the world, into the somber season Lent; Jesus as Son of man and sacrifice for

mankind. Today we celebrate Jesus' divine glory and his human sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the world. In the next 40 days of Lent we will be privileged and blessed to study this sacrifice of Christ. We will be reminded again of the depth of the love of our Lord for his creation. As we see Jesus during Lent, we will be reminded how Jesus' sacrifice took place according to God's plan and timeline. Jesus' transfiguration is revealing. At Jesus' transfiguration we have seen Jesus' divine glory and Jesus has prepared us for sacrifice. Amen

Benediction:

Beloved, go now in the strength and power of what you have witnessed in this place knowing that the glory that leads us into transition also comforts us in our growing pains and sustains us as we take up our mantle and cross over to the other side. Amen.