

We are taught in the Book of Common Prayer that every Sunday is *a weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of Jesus*. I would also like to think that each Sunday is a little bit of the feast of the Transfiguration – although, oddly it's really not often that this feast, celebrated on August 6th, happens to be actually on a Sunday. So we're blessed today!

I'd like to think of each Sunday as a little bit of the feast of the Transfiguration for two reasons:

First of all, because on Sunday we are called to contemplate Jesus's beauty, and I guess it's not hard to relate to that here at Grace Church, with the wonderful job our altar guild, lay ministers, musicians and singers do. There is so much beauty in this church to see and to hear, a beauty that tells us about the Lord's beauty, this beauty the disciples could contemplate on that day at Mount Tabor.

The other reason I like to think of Sunday as a little bit of the feast of the Transfiguration is because, as the disciples, when everybody else is sleeping, we have to drag ourselves out of bed. Well, not so true if it's an evening service! But one thing is sure: Probably like a lot of us, the disciples had had a long week. To give you some context, this story happens eight days after the feeding of the 5000 thousands. Jesus had been teaching a big crowd, there was probably a lot of noise, agitation, solicitation. After that, instead of having some relaxing time, Jesus asks the disciples who they think he is, and as Peter confesses Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus foretells them his sufferings to come and how they will also have to suffer.

The disciples are exhausted physically, nervously and probably they feel quite anxious as well. And yet. Yet, instead of staying down in the valley, three of them – we don't know if Jesus actively chooses them, or if they are just willing to go – Peter, John and James hike the mountain to take a time of prayer with Jesus. Disregarding all the things they could be doing (or not doing), they feel this call to prayer. The story of the Transfiguration is actually related in all the three synoptic Gospel (That is Matthew, Mark and Luke), but Luke is the only one who mentions that it is a time of prayer. And I think it makes a big difference we need to ponder.

First of all, the story shows us that prayer is something we need. Maybe we were taught that we need to pray to make God happy or to obtain things, and sometimes there is a little of that, but most of the time, we need prayer for prayer itself, for being with God who brings the real rest and the true peace. God who guides us and helps us figure things out, helps us to make sense of all that happens to us and around us. At this point, the disciples were all greatly perplexed, but some of them were smart enough to realize they really needed to pray, and so they followed Jesus and fought to stay awake. Jesus needed to pray as well. Jesus had been welcomed by the crowds, but all these people were mostly interested in having their own needs met. They weren't that interested in Jesus himself, and Jesus could foresee the rejection and the sufferings he would have to undergo. Of course, he knew he had mission to accomplish, but maybe he was wondering how to carry it out. And so he went up to pray. What we can understand from Jesus' dialogue with Moses and Elijah, is that he was trying to figure that all out, receive guidance and encouragement. I often hear Christians saying they *never pray for themselves*, and I am worried about that. Of course, they mean they don't want to bother God with anything, and they rather spend their time praying for their loved ones. It is very generous, yet I think we are all in dire need to pray for ourselves because we need to figure our own call, the life God intends for us. And we need God to help us bear it all. If Jesus needed to pray for himself, how wouldn't we need it? We don't have to feel good to pray. Actually, we can feel very anxious, or just bored or tired, as the disciples, and that's the perfect time to pray. It's very different with family and friends right? I usually wait to have something exciting I can share about to email my friends. I usually wait to be in a good mood to call my mother. Well, not so with God. Not at all.

The second thing that stands out in Luke's Gospel, as he presents the Transfiguration as a time of prayer, is that we have to understand it has never been intended to be a show for the disciples' edification. They are looking at Jesus praying, and we already know about their curiosity because they will ask Jesus to teach them to pray the Lord's prayer. They realize there is really something deep going on when Jesus prays. I love that about the disciples that in spite of their sleepiness, they stayed awake because they were so curious about Jesus. And I love that so many Christians today, in spite of tiredness or business or all the entertainment available,

they take time to come to church because they are curious about Jesus. The disciples saw Jesus doing these amazing things and heard him speaking about these troubling things, and, instead of trying to take advantage of him because he was powerful and made miracles, they want to understand and come closer to God. They are not so interested in what Jesus can do for them than about who is Jesus - which was the very question Jesus asked Peter right before this passage: *Who do you think I am?* Jesus could see they were all wondering.

What happens in this passage is that the disciples look at Jesus to understand who he is. They have this revelation of Jesus' beauty, not because they are in the perfect mood or have the perfect faith, but because for the first time maybe they stop looking at Jesus just as a wise teacher or as a miracle doer. They look at Jesus for who he is, and that's when they can see his beauty. We can only come close to God's beauty if we stop thinking about what God can do for us. If we just take time to be with God. This is exactly the same with people, with nature, even with things. The only way to see them for real is to sit with them.

This is a disease of our times not to be able to see beauty. I am a museums lover and I am in awe when I look at the everyday things in the ancient times, and how they looked beautiful, even a spoon or a comb. Things even tools weren't meant to be only useful, they had their own share in glory, they were *things* actually, not just *tools* that you can throw away once you're done with them. This is often the way we look at nature too. We just overlook what it is truly to find out only how we can use it for our own profit. A few days ago I found a praying mantis sitting on my car, I tried to remove it with a piece of paper and, as it wasn't really willing to cooperate, I had time to have a close look at it. This small insect, I never realized, it is the most perfect thing.

Do we see beauty and the glory of God around us? We would act so differently if we did: with more respect, tenderness and love. It's not only on Mount Tabor that Christ was beautiful, Christ's beauty was there all along, but it was just given to the disciples to see it so they keep looking for it. That's why Jesus does not feel the need to have a tent up there, as Peter suggests. Christ's beauty is everywhere.

You probably know that the feast of Transfiguration is very important in the Eastern Christianity. They are many icons of the Transfiguration. As Christians, we stopped thinking images are idols and we should not make some. We believe that the glory of God can be seen in the flesh. Not only human flesh, but all that is incarnated in the world about us.

It's important to remember to look at one another as beautiful. It's important in our work and mission, so we won't despise anyone, but also in order that our compassion won't turn to pity. We are often willing to be out there helping people, but as the disciples we need to take time to step back from what we are doing, so we can see how God's beauty is revealed in the ones we serve. They often are our teachers, not just the recipients of our help. Maybe beauty is not obvious but if we look prayerfully to find God's glory, we will find it. In my former parish, there was a very old lady, bed ridden, very frail, but she had this glow the Gospel talks about, you could really see Christ in her.

Seeing beauty in oneself and in others reveal our uniqueness and preciousness, this very voice we hear from heaven today: *My Son, my chosen*. Most voices we hear today lead us to believe that people are not very precious, many voices can make us feel small or empty. That's one of the reasons I don't like most TV shows where most characters are so average. It's draining to believe that humanity is mean. I regret the lectionary omits the last part of our Gospel story. When Jesus comes down from the mountain, the first thing he does is to drive out Satan from a man. It's interesting because I believe most of Satan's work is to make us believe that we don't count, when God's job is to make us know we are valuable and can be filled with his glory.

Christ is God revealed in the flesh and the mirror that is handed to us. We are called to see ourselves in Christ's mirror and to make ours these words that we are God's children and God's chosen. We are beautiful and therefore precious. And what we do matters. We are part of God's plan and God's mission. It should be for us, as it was for the disciples, in spite of our fatigue and questions, a great comfort and a great encouragement. Amen.