

## **Transfiguration Sunday – 02/11/2024**

Do we desire to know Jesus more intimately? You may say, of course all Christians do. What could that look like? Jesus does desire an intimate relationship with each one of us.

One way to begin answering this question is to look at our experience in relationship with human beings. Some people only have one best friend their entire lives, others have had a number of them. Hopefully if you have or have had a partner/spouse, they have been your best friend on many levels and this involves intimacy. We learn to appreciate these relationships, but it has not always been easy. It does mean being honest with each other and this doesn't always make us comfortable. Even though Jesus knows everything about us, it is often difficult to be honest with him.

Having intimacy with another means that we need to be honest with ourselves. Who are we? Intimacy with another means that we trust them enough to tell us the truth even if it hurts. This is why we don't always have a lot of best friends. There is pain and hopefully always affirmation in each of our relationships. A best friend walks with us through the celebratory times and times we would rather not have to walk through. Could Jesus be shining his light through our best friend?

In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus takes his disciples up on the mountain. They have no idea why Jesus is taking them up there. Mark doesn't waste any time and Jesus is transfigured before them. He was lit up along with Moses and Elijah. Moses represent the law and Elijah represents the prophets.

I question how Peter, James, and John knew who Moses and Elijah were, as I am sure they never had met them. Jesus is having a conversation with Moses and Elijah, but Mark doesn't say what they were talking about. Since Peter could never be quiet, he suggested to Jesus that building three booths would be a good idea in order to prolong this vision. All three disciples were scared, James and John seemed to be too scared to speak.

Jesus did not even answer Peter as a cloud overshadowed them and a voice was heard from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him." That ended the whole scene in front of them, only Jesus and the disciples were left. It was time to leave and go back down the mountain. Jesus told them to tell no one about what they had just experienced, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. It is thought that people would not understand this scene until Jesus' resurrection. I'm sure that can be said of the disciples also.

There seems to have been a connection there between Jesus and his disciples. This scene tied together what they would have known from their oral history and writings there may have been at that time. Jesus said he came to fulfill the law and not to abolish it. Jesus came to explain the law once again as people were not getting it. God gave these laws to guide us in how to be in relationship with them and others.

The law has not changed, and this is the original law that God gave to Moses. What came after was made by human beings and often paralyzed the intent of the law first given. Jesus summed up the law into two commandments, You shall love the Lord your God with all of you heart, soul, and all your mind and the second to love your neighbor as yourself.

These commandments help us to be in relationship with God in Jesus Christ and other human beings. Unfortunately, we have one word for love, where in the Greek there are at least three words for love. There is the philios which is the sibling kind of love; eros which is the sexual kind of love; and the agape which is a sacrificial love.

Each one of these types of love can have different levels of intimacy also. Each one takes a little bit different kind of work. This means time, thought and energy. There is only so much time in each day and we are all responsible for something or someone else. Thus, we are compelled to make decisions on how we spend our time, energy and thoughts.

The busier we get the less intimacy there is including with ourselves. Sometimes it is an event, for our disciples in the Gospel lesson it was a mountaintop experience that made them stop. There was a connection there that was not easily understood. It was a place where they were stopped and challenged to reflect on their relationships.

There was a connection that was building a foundation for the disciple's relationship with Jesus and their neighbors. With Moses and Elijah there it connected the faith that they had grown up with. Then God came in and said Jesus is my Son, listen to Him.

I would gather that the disciples pondered this event for some time. Jesus even told them not to tell the others as they may not understand. That connection between the disciples themselves and then with Jesus was strengthened in that event. Jesus only asked Peter, James, and John to go with him and consider how they were using their time, energy and thinking in their relationships.

Jesus calls each of us into relationship with him. This relationship begins at baptism. We as the beloved community are called to model what it means to be in

relationship with God in Jesus Christ and each other. At confirmation we make a public affirmation of this relationship with Jesus.

Every one of us has a different kind of relationship with Jesus. God has made each one of us to think and process differently. Thus, we relate to Jesus in different ways and may use different names to address God in Jesus Christ. In my experience in the Lutheran church, I don't feel that we have spoken enough about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It really is a balance between a corporate and personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

When I was in fifth grade, I remember watching a Billy Graham Crusade on television. At the end of his preaching when he had the altar call, I knelt down and prayed. There was a connection there that I did not fully understand.

As I have grown in my faith, I now look at that as a time of connecting in that moment. Yes I had been baptized and I was a Christian and on that night I was affirming my personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Last Sunday we had a healing service and whether you came up for prayer or not, I believe what we were doing in worship is affirming that we believe God in Jesus Christ is a healer and that with the help of the Holy Spirit we are drawn to connect and reconnect with God in Jesus Christ.

Everything that I have described as to what goes into a human relationship is challenged even more with Jesus. With Jesus, we can't literally see him. Thus in a sense it takes more time, energy and thinking.

Next Sunday we will be doing a few different things. We will be begin reciting the bible verse that I have chosen from our lessons in worship and wrote a newsletter article on. We will do this at the end of the announcements. Also, we will be doing the prayers of intercession a little differently. I will ask that prayer requests that are made on that Sunday are written on a card and the ushers will make sure that I get them.

We will sing a prayer song, I will then pray including these and some of the intercessions that we normally use and at the end we will sing the prayer song again. While I am praying, Bruce will be playing.

I would ask that you use this time to focus on your personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. On Wednesday, we gather together to say that we are nothing without God in Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to step back and examine our relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

God in Jesus Christ calls each one of us by name to foster our relationship with them. Reflect while we are here in worship, maybe the mountaintop, how intimate our relationship with God in Jesus Christ is?