

This past week, I have been very aware of the way pandemic fatigue is increasingly becoming an ordinary aspect of daily life. The endless number of Zoom meetings, the isolation, the ordering of groceries online, the lack of being able to see people's faces in person, our collective deep brokenness as people, and the sadness and yearning I feel as I want to be with our kids and grandkids, all are increasingly becoming a darkened scar on our lives. In some ways, the light of hope just seems dimmed, and we cannot clearly see what is real. As we live in this pandemic bubble of constraints, the daily challenges sometimes are like a dark veil that covers up what is truly important and what is truly real. Laden by what has become an ordinariness of pandemic routine, we often do not see the deeper truth and reality of God's presence with us, **the immeasurable love in which God holds us**, the Love that dances at the very heart of existence.

Quite frankly, most people seem to think God is out there somewhere. Maybe way up there, but far removed from our everyday experience. And, far too often, religion teaches that we should **seek out** the presence of God. However, the **reality** is that we cannot seek out God's presence, we cannot earn God's presence to us, we cannot prove

ourselves worthy of God's presence, **nor can we do anything to prohibit God's presence to us.** The deepest truth given to us in today's gospel reading is that we are totally and completely **enveloped** in the presence of God and God's immeasurable love. **That** is what is truly **real**. Yet, those moments of transparency that enable us to see more clearly seem few and infrequent. New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright, describes those moments as points in time when "the veil of ordinariness that normally prevents us from seeing the 'inside' of a situation is drawn back, and a fuller reality is disclosed."

As we look at today's gospel reading, Peter, James, and John experience such a moment when that veil is drawn back. When looking at this gospel passage, we should understand this is a **story**. We should let go of our need for facts and allow a more profound truth to speak as the veil is drawn back so **we** can see a **deeper** truth, a fuller reality.

In this gospel reading, Jesus is transfigured and three of Jesus' disciples get a glimpse of how things **really** are, what is **truly real**. Listen to the beautiful poetic narrative of this experience as described in a sonnet by English writer, poet, and priest, Malcolm Guite:

For that one moment, 'in and out of time,'
On that one mountain where all moments meet,
The daily veil that covers the sublime
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.

There were no angels full of eyes and wings
Just living glory full of truth and grace.
The Love that dances at the heart of things
Shone out upon us from a human face
And to that light the light in us leaped up,
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

In that experience on the mountain, the disciples saw Jesus in a moment of transparency that transformed everything. Yes, it was a moment when the Love that dances at the very heart of things shone out upon them from a human face. In that moment of transfiguration what the disciples glimpsed was their rabbi, friend and teacher, Jesus, so in alignment with the love of the one who created us ALL in love and then called us to walk in love with each other, that he was transformed – transfigured – in front of their awestruck eyes. And, they heard a voice speak the same words that had been spoken at the Jordan River when Jesus was baptized by John: “This is my son, the **Beloved. Listen** to him.” In that moment in time, the disciples were enveloped by the immeasurable love of God. They were shown God’s love as seen in the very face of Jesus. And, they were told to **listen to Love.**

On this fourteenth day of February, a day culture sets aside to celebrate human love, it is also important to think about the nature of divine

love, the **belovedness** seen in the person of Jesus. It is important to think about Jesus as God's beloved, about the fact that God calls each one of us **beloved**, and the reality that we are called to live and walk in that love.

I think far too often, we simply fail to recognize that God calls us **beloved**. And, the consequence of this is lack of recognition is that we then fail to recognize that every **other person** is also **beloved** of God! Also, far too often, we are tempted to take the experience of God's transforming love and try to contain it, hold on to it and keep it, and box it up in dogma, creed, doctrine, rubric, order, construct, book.....or even a booth, just like clueless Peter. Yes, clueless Peter. He is **so** like us and he fell right into the same temptation we fall into as he says, "Let us build some booths." And, what happens when Peter says that? The voice of God **interrupts**, essentially saying, "This is not about building booths, Peter. This is about my **Beloved**. Listen to him."

Friends, like Peter, we too must **listen** as we live our lives. **Listen** to Jesus. **Listen** to Jesus' words, the life he shared and the way he lived, his ministry, the way he healed people, liberated people, and set them free. Listen to the part about liberation to the oppressed. Good news to the poor. Sight to the blind. **Listen** to the part about **love** your **neighbor** as yourself. **Listen, and live that love!**

Well, down the mountain they went to proclaim the Good News of God's astounding **love** to a world desperately in need of love, a world so desperately in need that it could **not** handle the message. The world could not handle such an immeasurable, divine **love**, so it nailed that Love to a cross. But, here is the thing about divine Love: not even death can hold it down, keep it contained or buried. **Love** was resurrected and that love continually brings forth life. That love gives us life, heals us, sets us free and resurrects us. And, we are called to **live** this **love**. We, too, are called to go out into a world that is veiled in the ordinariness of life, a world yearning for a glimpse of how things really are. We are called to go out into the world to pull back the veil of darkness, of violence, oppression, division, disease, of separation that keeps all of us from living in love, and the veil that keeps the human race from **being** the human family God intended it to be. We are called to **live** in such a way that the veil of darkness is drawn back, and the more sublime, deeper truth of life can be revealed.

Friends, as we gather each week, we gather so that we, too, might be changed by **our** glimpse of how things **really** are. We gather so that we might be transfigured into radical bearers of the **light of God's inclusive love**. We gather so that we can then go out into a world that desperately needs that light and that love. We gather so that we can remember how

much **we** are loved and then be sent down off the mountain in **response** to God's love, **not** to build booths or write creeds or dictate dogmas, but to **do** the work of **justice**. To love **mercy**. And to walk **humbly** with the God who created us in love and then called us to **love one another**, until:

- this world – this fragile earth, our island home – is transformed by the transparency of the Love that dances at the heart of all things.
- and loving your **neighbor** as yourself means **not** deporting your neighbor.
- and black mothers don't have to put their young black sons into bed every night praying they'll be safe from the lethal racism that presently infects our country.
- and our unhealthy obsession with guns dissipates so that gun violence no longer takes thousands of American lives each year.
- and we all recognize that climate science is not a "myth" but our **only** hope of reversing the damage we have done to our planet.
- and transgender and LGBTQIA+ youth no longer consider suicide because they finally understand they are precious to God and loved by God as they are.
- and people in our neighborhood, our country and the world no longer go hungry or homeless.
- and people understand that **true** freedom is found in loving God and loving your **neighbor** as yourself, which means doing things like wearing a mask and undertaking **everything** you can do so that your neighbor does not become ill and die in this pandemic.

Friends, this week we will walk through the doorway into Lent and journey to the cross, that place of **transforming Love**. In the cross we discover God's transformational love unveiled for the life of the world. Be open to become **changed**, be open to be transformed, be open to be made new, and be open to truly **live** the **love** of God!