

February 14th, 2021
First Lutheran Church
Lengthening the Love and Light of Christ
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Grace and peace in the name of God our loving Creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Happy Valentine's Day! It is good for us to be here, wherever here is for you we are gathered together for worship on this day when we remember the love in our lives, and we today remember the source of that love.

And Happy Transfiguration Sunday! In our gospel we hear of Jesus body shining and changing its appearance after a trip up a mountain. When Jesus goes up the mountain with Peter, James and John they most likely don't know what they are getting into. A hike? "Sure, Jesus I guess we could use some exercise". They likely couldn't predict what would happen once they were there. Seeing Moses and Elijah connects the prophets of the Jewish people and merges ages that are supposed to be separate into a powerful moment that baffles them. In fact, Peter is so flustered the gospel text actually says, the only reason he said what he did was because "he did not know what to say". Peter in a trance says something about building some houses for these guests. Maybe it's because he wants this powerful triumvirate of Moses, Elijah and Jesus to stay with him. Maybe it's because Peter is like a lot of guys I know and when he gets nervous he wants to do something with his hands to keep him busy and make himself feel useful.

But imagine the shock, if you suddenly saw people that had died centuries before appear in front of you and start talking to your friend and teacher. It

would have been pretty mindblowing for us, and it was for these three disciples who must have asked, why am I invited into this? Am I supposed to do something here? What am I bringing to this party?

Like most of the events Jesus invites his first disciples into and the ones he invites us into: sharing the Word, healings, the feeding of the 5000, baptism, the Lord's Supper, worship...the people that come are not expected to earn or pay their way in. The disciples try to make themselves useful, but their presence there was mainly to witness and hear God's message "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" This was the message at Jesus' baptism that they didn't hear then, but now it comes through loud and clear. The confession that Peter made a few days earlier, declaring Jesus as the Son of God is affirmed. And as these disciples walk with Jesus, his authority to teach them are also reinforced through supernatural means.

God reaches into this moment to share something timeless.

I often use science to help me understand theology. Again and again, as humans explore the mysteries of creation, God's fingerprints seem to appear, and the echoes of those discoveries often ring in Scripture. God, the Creator, keeps on creating, and the story God tells through Jesus is linked to the same creativity that formed the earth and the universe. When we are talking about who Jesus was and is, I believe He is not just a theological or spiritual figure, He is at the heart of God's creation and there are reflections of the same creative force in the physical world if we know where to look and have eyes to see!

One of the scientific theories that helps me understand Jesus is Einstein's theory of relativity. Perhaps you remember the equation $E=MC^2$. Well, what Einstein

laid out in this theory, turned the scientific world upside down. The constant of physics had always been Time. There was an understanding of time in creation that was like a stopwatch that didn't change. It kept moving at the same rate. But Einstein when he pondered the way creation was made, saw something different. He said that it was light that was a constant and that light could bend time. Essentially, he said that light can transform while remaining constant.

What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus said He was the "light of the world" and our lesson from Second Corinthians today reminds us, "For it is God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Paul echoes, that wherever God is creating, cleansing, transforming, light is the instrument of that change.

That is the power of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is not just Jesus' appearance that changes, it is what makes that happen. Jesus is light and He is in the light on the mountain. Whatever experience transcended time and space and let Jesus have Moses and Elijah there in that place, the light seems tied to it. And while Jesus is transfigured, the light he is connecting to surely is the transformative light of creation. Like Einstein described light, Jesus is constant, but his light means change for others.

Lent is a time where we celebrate light. It is often experienced as a time when we turn in on ourselves and focus on our own practices and behavior. But one of the sources of this word is the word for "lengthening" as in the lengthening of days. Lent is a time of celebrating the light coming into our lives. A light

that helps us see ourselves and the world with new eyes. As Christians that is a celebration of letting the light of Christ shine in the midst of our lives and at the center of our lives. The light of truth and the light of creativity.

And when we have eyes to see Christ in front of us, shining into us with the love that is greater than anything humans can give, it flows into the love we share with each other. This is the love that is the pulse of God's heart through the universe. When we are in Christ's light we can see the love around us. We can receive it without a fight about wanting to earn it or pay for it somehow. We enter into it without owning it or keeping it safe from others. We bathe in the light that Jesus brings. This light can cleanse us and refine us. It is the eternal gift that shines in the darkness of a long winter and it pulls us each day into a little more light and a return to God's love.

We know this journey ends on a hill with a cross on it and that on that cross is where God's glory is truly seen. On the cross we see the love God has for us and believe that this is light that shines in the darkness for all creation, past present and future. And in the resurrection, we know the light of the first day of the re-creation, and even now it shines into our lives. We care for that light and walk with it during the days of Lent. We tend to the light that we receive and share. And on this Transfiguration Sunday, we sing out our Alleluias together (and I hope you will sing along with our hymn of the day), as we wait on our Easter Joy and celebrate the light of the new creation kindled in our hearts anew.

May the promises of God light up your hearts and the love and peace of Christ be with you! Amen.