

Sunday, February 10, 2013
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – “Let Your Light Shine”

There is so much in this brief passage (Luke 9:28-36).

We could focus on Peter, John and James being singled out to accompany Jesus on this foray into the mountains.

We could talk about discipleship and what it means to be asked to walk with Jesus.

We could take the time to reflect on the costs and joys of discipleship.

We could focus on Jesus going off to a quiet mountain to pray and explore all of the ways that we might remove ourselves from the busyness of life to have time for quiet reflection.

We could talk about the implications of Jesus’ transformation and what it meant that “the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white.”

Is this what happens when we let God into our hearts?

I wonder if we have somehow curtailed our ability to shine with a blinding radiance.

I was thinking about the times in our lives when we say that people are glowing: at weddings, when someone is pregnant and often at someone’s death.

Each of these are times when love is the prevailing feeling- along with selflessness and surrender, so perhaps we too could change our faces and let God’s love show more often.

We could talk about Moses and Elijah showing up on the mountaintop and how their appearance shows Jesus as the one who fulfills the promise of both the law, represented by Moses and the prophets represented by Elijah.

We could talk about the conversation regarding Jesus’ impending departure in Jerusalem and what the foretelling of that meant.

We could talk about Peter, John and James falling asleep in the midst of all this glory and reflect on how often we miss opportunities to witness God’s power because we are distracted.

One commentator suggested that the disciples were tired because it was nighttime.

For me, that changes the picture I have of the scene;

It seems even more powerful for Jesus to light up the darkness – than to glow in the light.

We could talk about Peter’s idea to build three structures to house these holy men and try to figure out why we, like Peter, try to domesticate the divine and fit it into our world.

We could talk about the cloud that came over the group and wonder what sort of clouds might be enveloping us.

We could talk about a voice from heaven that says, “This is my Son, listen to him” and count the times that we have chosen not to listen to Jesus.

We could talk about the fact that scripture says the disciples were silent and told no one of any of the things they had seen – but we know the story so somebody told-perhaps just one person- and are those little breaches of confidentiality and exaggerations just a part of our lives?

We could talk about what happened before, when Jesus said “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it;” or what happened after when Jesus went down from the mountain and healed a boy with a demon in an astounding display of divine power.

Or, we could take a deep breath and reflect on the majesty and magnitude of God illustrated in this passage and talk about ways that our own lives can be transformed in the coming weeks of Lent.

This passage represents a blending of what is with what is not yet.

It is the everydayness in the midst of new creation.

It is about being alert to the transcendence that is all around us and being open to the challenge that is set before us.

Lent is the period in the church year where we focus our attention on strengthening our relationship with God.

Historically, people would give something up for Lent, as a sacrifice – a way of showing their commitment to God.

More recently, the practice of doing something for Lent, has taken hold.

While we might not choose to give up chocolate for Lent, we must choose to give up those things that take us away from God.

We cannot attend to our spiritual growth unless we make room in our lives for the disciplines and habits that bring us closer to God.

Psychotherapist, Carl Jung said, “We seldom get rid of an evil merely by understanding its causes...obstinate habits do not disappear until replaced by other habits...No amount of confession and no amount of explaining can make the crooked plant grow straight; it must be trained upon the trellis of the norm by the gardener’s art.”

This Lenten journey requires that you be the person who trains yourself – it is your spiritual garden that is being tended.

I invite you to choose one thing to do differently over the next six weeks.

Make up your mind to be different on Easter than you are on Ash Wednesday.

Choose something about you or your life that you want to alter and commit to moving incrementally forward – one step each day-40 steps.

Improving our lives, strengthening our relationship to God is not easy.

It takes time and effort.

It requires us to change our way of thinking and being.

At the end of the journey my hope is that you will have increased the light in your life by having moved away from those things or thoughts that cause darkness.

It will be gradual – but change will come.

You know some mornings I can see the sun rising in the sky out my window, a distinct orb in the eastern sky.

But some days the light just comes in a way that I can't really track.

I have watched, in awe, as the amaryllis bulbs in my window pots slowly unfold, a bit each day, until we are graced with a beautiful flower.

They seemed to grow so quickly that I felt that if I sat and stared at them I would be able to see the petals unfold.

But again, with the right care, the blossoming simply happens.

Mystic Thomas Merton used a similar metaphor as advice to a friend on the subject of praying for change:

“Quit trying so hard in prayer. How does an apple ripen? It just sits in the sun. A small green apple cannot ripen in one night by tightening all its muscles, squinting its eyes and tightening its jaw in order to find itself the next morning miraculously large, red, ripe, and juicy beside its small green counterparts.

Like the birth of a baby or the opening of a rose, the birth of the true self takes place in God's time.

We must wait for God, we must be awake; we must trust in his hidden action within us, but, we must be open to that action.

We must not do anything to block God's work within us.

There is a beautiful book of poetry by Ann Weams called *Kneeling in Jerusalem*. I share with you this poem called “A Listening”

Going through Lent

is a listening.

When we listen to the word,

we hear

where we are so

blatantly

unloving.

If we listen to the word,

and hallow it

into our lives,

we hear

how we can so

abundantly live again.

Are there places in your life that would be described as “unloving?”

What has to happen to transform those places into opportunities for abundant life?

This is the work of Lent.

This is to be the focus of our Easter preparation.

During the Lenten season we will explore discipleship, forgiveness, prayer, idolatry and Sabbath taking – all of the issues raised in today’s passage

We will work together to find ways to open ourselves to God’s transformative power.

We will watch carefully for acts of grace.

We will journey with Jesus to the mountaintop and to Jerusalem and open ourselves to be transformed by the lessons we will learn.

We will listen – as God has instructed – to the voice of Jesus directing our lives, changing our habits, and creating an Easter story within and among us.

