Lord of All Creation

Matthew 17:1-9 Kimby Young

John 6:16-22 February 11, 2024

The last Sunday of Epiphany, the last Sunday before Lent begins – in other words today – is Transfiguration Sunday. We heard the story from Matthew about Jesus and the disciples going up a mountain where something wildly mysterious and miraculous happened. We aren’t even sure what happened - bright lights, blazing colors, mysterious figures, unusual revelations, a voice from heaven. We really don’t understand the event. And maybe that’s the point. The season of Epiphany is all about revelation – seeing God, understanding God, knowing God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. On this last Sunday of Epiphany we are reminded that even though Jesus points us toward God and shows us who God is, there is so much that we cannot understand. God is mystery, magnificent, transcendent, awesome, infinite, eternal, beyond our imaginations. Our God is … beyond great, beyond wondrous. Even though we experience the love and presence of God, we can never fully grasp all that God is.

We do understand part of the symbolism of the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, the two greatest figures of our faith history, perhaps. Moses representing the law of love and Elijah representing the prophets. Prior to Jesus these were the figures who spoke for God to humans - the law and the prophets were our way of hearing from God. With the coming of Jesus, God speaks to humans directly. God came in the flesh to show us how to live. Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets. Jesus gave humanity a direct connection to God through the Holy Spirit. Now we are able speak to God. God speaks to us. We still don’t understand everything. But we understand that God loves us and wants to be with us.

This year, since we’ve been exploring the miracles of Jesus during Epiphany, I started thinking about this great miraculous event of the transfiguration in the context of some of the other miracles. Particularly, the miracles that show Jesus in command of the world, the natural elements, the creation. Jesus Christ, even as a human being, had complete command of all of creation. He could tell storms to stop. He could walk on water. He could calm the sea. He could encourage plants to grow. Jesus didn’t do this often, because Jesus tried to live as we live. But sometimes, like today’s story from John. Sometimes Jesus would transform the world physically in order to teach us to trust God, to help us to not be afraid.

Of course, it didn’t work completely. We are often afraid. Nevertheless, Jesus tried and tries still to calm us, to reassure us, to help us to trust. Even in both gospel lessons for today, the disciples were afraid. But again, in both scripture passages for today, Jesus continues to say, “Do not be afraid. Fear not. I am with you. I love you. Everything is going to be alright. Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid. I’ve got this. I’ve got everything. Everything in the entire world – Jesus says. We should not be afraid because we trust. Jesus is in control. God’s plan is in place. And it’s all about love.

In a version of the story from another gospel, from Matthew, Jesus walks out to the disciples, walks out across the water and says, “Don’t be afraid.” And then Peter – wonderful, impetuous faithful crazy Peter says, “OK, I’m not afraid. I’ll walk on water to meet you if you call me.” Jesus calls Peter. Peter starts walking. He’s doing pretty well for a minute. Then Peter thinks too much about what is happening, he takes his focus off Jesus, he gets distracted by the wind and the waves, and Peter begins to sink. Peter cries to Jesus, “Save me.” And of course, immediately, Jesus is with him. Jesus saves him. Jesus lifts him up out of the deep. Jesus says, you’re ok. I’ve got you. And of course, immediately, all is well.

Maybe we haven’t experienced anything like Peter. No walking on water. No transfiguration. But just like Peter, all of us, each of us, has been caught by Jesus and lifted up. We have been settled again on solid ground. We have been held in the arms of a Savior. We have been brought to safety. We have been loved and protected and encouraged and blessed. Yes, like Peter we are sometimes distracted or lose focus. We are often afraid or overwhelmed. But today’s scripture reminds us that Jesus is steadfast, even if we are not. God is faithful, even if we are fearful. And our loving Lord of the Universe holds us in powerful purposeful hands. God’s got this. God’s got you. Trust God. All will be well.

This Wednesday, we start our Lenten journey. Lent is intended to be a time when we focus on God and try to serve God fully. It is a 40 day journey into the heart of God, following Jesus Christ. We walk together and support one another. We reach out into the world and try to share God’s love. We will probably take a few missteps along the way. But that’s ok. God’s got you. God will carry you. Trust God and step out in faith. Jesus shows us how to love one another and how to love the world. Be not afraid.

As we lean forward into Lent, we begin with love. Ash Wednesday is Valentines Day.

We focus on God’s love for us and our love for God. We also think about Jesus Christ’s call to love one another. During these 40 days – there are a lot of distractions. Wind and waves to take our focus off of Jesus. But during the days ahead, there will also be many chances to focus on God’s love, to feel God’s presence and power moving for you. There will be countless chances to act in loving ways, to trust God and to share God’s love with others. Your invitation this Lent is to find concrete ways to notice God’s love for you, and active ways of sharing God’s love with someone else – showing God’s love in the world. We have 40 days plus Sundays. Your invitation is to take note of God’s love every single day. Notice God’s love in your life, God’s blessing, God’s presence, God’s purpose. Notice God. Write it down even – on your calendar, in your journal – take note at least once every day of how much God loves you. And second pass it on. Share God’s love in the world. Do at least one thing – at least one thing – you can always do more. Do one thing to share God’s love with someone else. It can be a kind word, a quiet gift, a prayer, a smile, a helping hand. Tell someone Jesus loves them. Every single day – share God’s love in the world wherever you are. You will be blessed. We all will be blessed. By the grace of God.