



## Sermon for The Last Sunday after the Epiphany, Feb. 27, 20021

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene      Kristin Keyes, Lay Preacher  
[Exodus 34:29-35](#)      [2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2](#)      [Luke 9:28-36, \[37-43a\]](#)

### Opening Ourselves to God's Deep and Abiding Love Will Transform Us Shine in My Heart Lord Jesus

Today's scriptures bring to mind a song we have been singing in our Well/Jordan Family Services throughout the season of Epiphany. Sing with me if you know it: *"I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus."*

The second verse speaks even more to the Light of God: *"I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus. Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path, and show me the way to the Father."* (#490, Hymnal 1982)

Today, we read of the luminescence – the light of the divine – reflected in both Moses and Jesus. Light so intense that Aaron, the leaders and the people of Israel were afraid to even look at Moses after he came down from Mt. Sinai carrying the tablets with the Ten Commandments. The light reflected on Jesus, which we know and celebrate each year on the last Sunday after the Epiphany as Transfiguration Sunday, literally changed his appearance and produced a white so bright it dazzled or glistened – which literally means emitting light.

In scripture, God's presence is often described using the brightness of a fire or the sun. We see this with Moses and the burning bush, and when God showed Moses his glory by revealing only his back as he walked by. We see it in the Psalms and in the apocalyptic scriptures of Daniel and Revelation. In fact, the hymn at the start of the sermon is based upon the scripture from Revelation.

Today's scriptures are especially poignant as this light occurs while talking with and being in God's presence. Moses had just spent 40 days and nights with God. Moses was often the mediator between God and the Israelites. This intense period spent with God caused a divine luminosity too intense for the people to view. Thus, Moses wore a veil when not in God's presence to make it easier for the Israelites to be near him to hear God's commandments and instructions.

Luke places Jesus' transfiguration about eight days after an intense ministry cycle. He had sent the twelve out to preach and heal and fed the five thousand. Peter had proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, and then Jesus taught about his pending suffering, death and resurrection, and the cost of discipleship, of following him. Jesus often took time with his disciples to pray after these ministry bursts if you will.

I thought I would approach our scriptures today with a new to me way of praying with scriptures, called Ignatian Imaginative Prayer. First, I set the scene in my mind – what do I see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Next, I entered the scene to experience what is happening and to hear what Jesus might say to me in this scene. Finally, I spent some time reflecting upon what it was I experienced. Let's go on a journey! I invite you to join me in this scene to imagine yourself on that mountain.

As our story opens, Jesus invites Peter, James, and John to go to the mountain to pray. I imagine James and John feeling a little competition with Peter, "Why did Jesus have to invite Peter to come with us to pray too." After all, it's not too much later in Luke, we read of the arguments over who among them is the greatest.

We travel up Mount Tabor. It's not a tall mountain at only 1,900 feet. But it does stand out in the landscape as it is the only mountain in the flat land around. It is tree covered, so it is cooler as the we make our way to our resting place. We are all a little tired, but don't sleep as Jesus moves off to pray.

As we are watching, Jesus starts to change before our very eyes and his clothes emit a dazzling light. Suddenly, two people have joined Jesus and they start talking. Holy Mackerel, it's Moses and Elijah also appearing in bright clothes. We hear them talking about Jesus' departure? His exodus if you will, talking about suffering, death, and resurrection? Isn't that what Jesus had tried to tell us only last week? We didn't understand it then, and Peter vehemently chastised Jesus for even saying such a thing. I'm not sure we get it now.

Peter rushes forward to say how good it is that we are all here. It is the festival of the Booths, our annual harvest celebration commemorating God's protection during the wilderness wanderings of our forefathers. We often build booths or tabernacles in which to rest in honor of the festival. Peter says to Jesus, "We should build three dwellings so that you may all stay here."

Next thing we know we are engulfed by a cloud, truly frightening as it falls onto us. Then a loud voice proclaims, "This is my Son, My chosen, listen to him!" This can only be the voice of God.

Then the cloud leaves and it is just Peter, James, John, and Jesus on the Mountain. Our hearts cry out that we want to stay to revel in this experience of God, of the divine. But Jesus moves us back down the mountain, back into his ministry. Back to the underserved, those who are marginalized, hungry, who need Jesus.

In fact, our experiences of going out to heal and preach the good news come back to haunt us. Here is that man and his son again, whom we couldn't cure, couldn't cast out the demon. Jesus is a little angry at us that we still don't seem to get it, but quickly heals the boy. We shake our heads at our lack of faith yet again and stand in awe at God's great glory revealed...yet again.

What a magical, mysterious text this is – it is about transfigurations, people who didn't die reappearing and a voice coming from a cloud. They all disappear into a cloud, and they hear God's loud voice. What God says is different here than what he said at Jesus' baptism, "You are my Son." Here God affirms what Peter alluded to a few days earlier, "This is my son, my Beloved/Chosen, listen to him!" Another thought came to me in this experience of the text, that both Moses and Elijah are still alive, giving me a greater hope and joy in our own eternal lives in Christ.

What did I experience and hear in my conversation with Jesus? We too can experience God's light, His divine presence. We can experience our own transformation by listening to and following Jesus, even though it may be a costly obedience.

It is in the very act of prayer that Jesus' appearance changes. It is conversation with God in God's presence that Moses' appearance changes. Prayer is often associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit, which empowers Jesus for his work. It is this Spirit of the Lord, as Paul proclaims, that empower us and transforms us.

Did you know that the human body literally glows already? In a study by Kyoto University in 2009, scientists studied the light our bodies emit. They learned it is visible light, but we can't necessarily see it as it is about 1,000 times less intense than the levels to which our naked eyes can see. Its glow rises and falls over the day, often linked to our body clocks and our metabolic rhythms fluctuating through the day. It is a glow these scientists have found, not just the heat we know our bodies produce and can be seen in thermal readings.

While there is no scientific proof, I like to think this glow we emit is the divine, that little bit of God that resides in each of us. We are made in the image of God, after all. I also can see how time spent in God's presence can transform us and cause our light to shine a little brighter as we live our lives in witness to God's saving grace.

Unlike many we read about in the Bible -- Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, the disciples, John the Baptist, and Paul -- we probably won't hear God's actual voice speaking to us. It's

always possible, however, it may not happen. So, how do we listen to God? While not a comprehensive list, here are a few ideas:

- God often speaks to us from the Bible. Listening as scripture is read, or as I tried to do to prepare for today's sermon, putting ourselves into the story and imagining it happening, can often lead to hearing God speak to us.
- Through the Holy Spirit working in us, God directs our thoughts or gives us ideas. If we ask God for help with something, we might want to take a little time to stop and listen. Am I hearing ideas or answers? What is the Holy Spirit guiding me to do?
- God sometimes speaks to us through other people. Ask the same questions you've asked of God to trusted friends to hear if there is an answer God is offering through them.
- And sometimes, there is poem, a passage in a book, or the lyrics from a song that divinely speak to us.

For today, as we are reeling from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and praying for the protection and safety of those who now find themselves in a war they didn't ask for, I think of a song by country singer Thomas Rhett, called *Be a Light*. Here are a few of the lyrics:

*In a time full of war, be peace  
In a time full of doubt, just believe  
Yeah, there ain't that much difference between you and me  
In a time full of war, be peace*

*In a world full of hate, be a light  
When you do somebody wrong, make it right  
Don't hide in the dark, you were born to shine  
In a world full of hate, be a light.*

When we spend time in God's presence, we become mirrors of God's light. Surprisingly, we often don't realize how we reflect God's light to those around us. I do know from my own experiences of living with and in God's presence, when I let God's light shine through me – when I walk as a child of the light of Jesus -- truly amazing things happen!

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

Amen.