



## Sermon for the Last Sunday after Epiphany, Feb. 14, 2021

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene     The Rev. Dr. David Gortner

[2 Corinthians 4:3-6](#)

[Mark 9:2-9](#)

Good morning, children of God. Good morning, and God's blessings.

Here in the cold of this week, we are finding warmth and light – in the continuing deployment of the vaccine that is bringing steady relief in this pandemic; in some slow but steady calming of vehemence across our nation; in today's celebrations of love; in this national holiday weekend honoring two of our most important presidents.

Warmth and light. They break through, even in the cold and dark we encounter in this life.

Happy Valentine's Day! Enjoy today with those you love, and remember today those who have loved you. It's a good day to call someone and extend your love to them.

Happy President's Day weekend. This national holiday given us by our government comes as a gift of rest and refreshment in an otherwise long stretch of winter. Remember our national leaders and all those in authority, and pray that they can live and lead with honor, honesty, and love for all the people in their care.

Today is also Transfiguration Sunday – the last Sunday in the Church's season of Epiphany. Through this season, we have sought, followed, and celebrated Jesus' light-bringing life. The bright light and love of God appeared and shone in this world through Jesus as he lived, moved, invited, called, taught, and healed. Today brings us to the end of this season, when Jesus ascends a high mountain with a few of his disciples, and in the quiet of that time and space apart he is transfigured and shines with dazzling brightness. Today, we ascend the mountain with these disciples and get a glimpse of the fullness of who Jesus really is.

Today, this last Sunday before we turn in Lent to confession and to seeing the cost of sin, before we join Jesus on the journey to the cross, today we celebrate the glory of God we find in this Jesus whom we follow. Today we have our eyes opened to what is the fullness of all that Jesus is. Today we catch a glimpse of glory – a dazzling bright light in the winter of our lives.

Today is about transformation. Today is about a revealing. Today is about seeing with truly open eyes what is before us.

I love that this day is happening this year on Valentine's Day. Because, love is bright. Love shines. Love sees things shining. Love reveals light within us and surrounding us. Love helps us see the brightness within those around us. Love sheds light all around.

Love shines and makes us see light.

Jesus' life was dedicated to love – a love that called people to who they truly were in God's eyes, that brought them out of darkness, that cleansed them, that released them, that helped them face and embrace the truth, that called them to their fullest purpose.

Think about those people in whom you have seen just a bit of this kind of light. Think about people you have known in whom you saw, even briefly, that light shining. People who poured themselves out in love for you, who looked on you with that open gaze of warm acceptance and adoration. Do you remember how that called forth light and love in you?

We promise in our baptism to “seek and serve Christ in all persons.” What would we be like, if we opened our eyes and hearts to see the light of Christ shining brightly in every person we met?

Oh, God, open our eyes to see your transforming light and love in others around us.

Jesus also led people. Jesus was a leader who led for love and truth – a teacher who taught and modeled love and truth.

It is only after his disciples had followed him for a long time, and had seen all that he had done and given of himself to others, that they were ready to see Jesus more fully for who he was. They found themselves changed by him – but they also had seen how he had changed others. Light and love had spread forth from him across the land.

Every once in a while, we experience a few leaders in our lives who offer a small version of that kind of self-giving leadership. Leadership that is not for self-aggrandizement and self-glorification, but leadership that is fully and completely for others and out of deep love for others. Leadership that does not restrict care only to those who are loyal followers, but leadership that extends care for all who are under their charge. This kind of leadership shines brightly and with messages of hope and care helps us all see light arising in new ways in the world around us. This kind of leadership calls forth light and love from all of us for others around us.

Jesus leads with light and love that burns within, at the very core of his being.

And it cannot help but shine forth.

So, today, on the mountain, we glimpse his glory – as he truly is – God incarnate, God made fully human and bringing out the complete brightness of what God created us to be.

Love and leadership that are grounded in God shine brightly. But such love and leadership also stand out in a world where relationships and rulership are so often tainted, twisted, corrupt. And such love and leadership will suffer the wounds and sorrows of the world they love and lead. And so, that which shines brightly also suffers and sorrows greatly.

We join Jesus today on seeing the glory of God radiating life-changing light and love. And we will turn from the mountaintop to the road to Jerusalem and the way of the cross. Such radiant love is

love that suffers and sorrows for those who are loved. This is the way of God, the path that God always follows, even to death and carries those in death through to everlasting light.

Amen.

### **Thanksgivings and Prayers for the Nation**

We thank you for the great resources of this nation. They make us rich, though we often exploit them.

*Forgive us.*

We thank you for the men and women who have made this country strong. They are models for us, though we often fall short of them.

*Inspire us.*

We thank you for the torch of liberty which has been lit in this land. It has drawn people from every nation, though we have often hidden from its light.

*Enlighten us.*

We thank you for the faith we have inherited in all its rich variety. It sustains our life, though we have been faithless again and again.

*Renew us.*

Help us, O Lord, to finish the good work here begun. Strengthen our efforts to blot out ignorance and prejudice, and to abolish poverty and crime. And hasten the day when all our people, with many voices in one united chorus, will glorify your holy Name.

*Amen.*