

Last Pentecost - Transfiguration
The Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC
February 27, 2022
The Rev. Catherine L. Tatem

Exodus 34.29-35 Psalm 99 2 Cor 3.12-4.2 Luke 9.28-43a

Today we close out the season of Pentecost, the season of showing Christ's light to all the world, with Peter, James, and John seeing the light of Christ in a whole new way. They are on Mt. Sinai; Moses is there, representing the Law. Elijah is there, representing the Prophets. Jesus, the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, is there, changed into dazzling light ... and the voice says "He is my son; listen to him!" The dazzling light of Christ's face and garments comes from within. That's what transfiguration is: a change that shows on the outside, but comes from the inside. Jesus' outside appearance, that of God's glory, matches Jesus' inside reality. No wonder the disciples are terrified to be found in the cloud! The cloud is God, and a voice – just as the one on the Jordan River did, proclaims Jesus as "My Son, my chosen one." The disciples have experienced more than the *glory* of God: they experienced God in Jesus.

Then, it is the disciples' turn – and our turn – to share God's glory by shining the light of Jesus into the world. More often than not, God's presence is evident in the most ordinary of places. In fact, we do not get to stay on those mountain highs, do we? We have periods of prosperity and of poverty; of spiritual light and darkness. In all of life, God is present and Jesus heals. We carry on Jesus' work through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Stated like that, it sounds like a beautiful world. And yet again, the world is at war, with Russia invading Ukraine for power and energy resources. Fear is rampant, death a constant reality, food, fuel, and necessities scarce to nonexistent. Our money, were we to send it, is worth nothing when there is nothing to purchase. We are sad, maybe angry, feeling loss and powerlessness. There are organizations who are, or will be active in Ukraine, giving us a way to give financially.

Even now, however, the church has the role that it has had since Christ's resurrection: to spread the light of Christ and the Good News of God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. We are called to be sources, beacons of HOPE regardless of our social reality. It is a form of humility to realize and live into our caretaking role of God's creation – and at this time, we call on the power of prayer, the power of miracles through the word of God.

Prayer is not inaction, but a deep listening and response to the voice of God. Give thanks to God every morning for being brought safely through the night. Implore God to make all of creation safe, knowing that God loves us beyond measure. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry reminded us yesterday that we are called to a particular place for a reason and for a season. You and I, the Episcopal Church, the entire Anglican Communion and people of faith throughout the world are alive in this time and these many places for a reason. We may never know what that reason is. But we do know THE reason: the love of Christ, the love of God. Presiding Bishop Curry commented that we might be being called to a revival of our faith in ways we've never done before. The past two years have shown us that we can carry out our faith in new ways. As Curry said, had a virtual church initiative come to us from a resolution at Convention, we might have read the resolution, accepted it "with thanks," and filed it away. Instead, we joined services across the country, hit our own walls of angst, anxiety, disinterested days ... and in those days, through those moments, came creativity and determination. We WILL worship, even when we

do not like our current choices. We WILL have a thriving parish, which in fact we have right now. We WILL reach out beyond ourselves even more than we do right now.

We will forge new relationships, beginning with one another in these pews. This where change begins. Invite someone you do not know to coffee hour – thanks be to God that we can gather in this way. By the way, for all the pressure there was about returning to coffee hour, now that we can have it, come. And it is time for more of us to prepare it. We cannot have coffee hour without people to prepare it and to clean up. We cannot live into our legacy of being a welcoming, family parish if you are worshipping today with people you do not know. Say hello. Introduce yourself. Claim a table at Waffle House. Now that we CAN gather, I pray that we do so. Call me and let's have coffee, tea, conversation in the community. Here. At the library. (Please), at the mall. :)

Bishop Curry also talked about reaching across our divides: political, theological, those of race and ideology. Here is the place in which transformation – even transfiguration, change from the inside that shows on the outside, begins. Spend time with someone who does not agree with you or with someone whose life you know little or nothing about. You do not have to discuss your differences – simply sit or walk side by side for a while. Maybe have some hard conversations, “as indeed you are doing (from Paul). Yes, the Church of the Redeemer is already doing the work of having hard conversations. We found a passion for building up this body of Christ during our Annual Meeting. People talked. Listened. We wanted to be heard so badly we stood up, maybe waved our arms a little, brought notes we'd made. Awesome! We are strengthened by such conversation and contributions. Discussing our many ideas and beliefs and then coming to the Lord's Table together are fundamental to our identity as Episcopalians and Anglicans. Said simply, **it's what we do**. We share infinitely more commonalities in our identity as beloved children of God.

Yesterday Episcopalians and guests throughout Upper South Carolina participated in the consecration service for the ninth bishop of our Diocese. Yes, we have a new bishop! He, too, is in SC in this time and place for a specific purpose and ministry. Together, we will discover what that ministry is – or we may realize it when his bishopric is long passed. In the meantime, we will welcome him, walk together, and be Christians in our unique ways. In his walk-about prior to the election, one of his comments (from my notes) is that community is not made in chaos, but in casseroles. Oh, how he's going to love the Church of the Redeemer – and probably every church in Upper SC!

Brothers and sisters, we have challenges in everything that we do. We also have Jesus Christ as the center of everything, including our very lives. As we prepare for Lent, let's make it a joyful time of repentance in whatever ways in which we need to turn back to God. As a strong, faithful, joy-filled and loving congregation, let's bring those attributes into our set aside time in the wilderness.

What will we learn? Let's find out, together, with a countenance that shows that the light of Christ shines within us, as it surely does.
In Christ, Amen.