

The Sunday Missive – February 14, 2021



st valentine at whitefriar street church in dublin

The Last Sunday After the Epiphany

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Nancy Castle, Jan Swanson, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, February 14. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to your rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or: sssymington@gmail.com. **Let us pray:**

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed. Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus. **Amen.**

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn 123 – Alleluia, Song of Gladness Vss. 1, 3 & 4

Alleluia, song of gladness, voice of joy that cannot die;
Alleluia is the anthem ever raised by choirs on high;
In the house of God abiding thus they sing eternally.

Alleluia though we cherish and would chant for evermore
Alleluia in our singing, let us for a while give o'er,
As our Savior in his fasting pleasures of the world forbore.

Therefore in our hymns we pray thee, grant us, blessed Trinity,
At the last to keep thine Easter with thy faithful saints on high;
There to thee for ever singing alleluia joyfully.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGypEOICckY>

A Reading from the Second Book of Kings – Chapter 2

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, he was with Elisha on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, “Wait for me here; the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went together down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” Elisha said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.” Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me on to Jericho.” But again he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” When they came to Jericho, the company of prophets there drew near and said, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” Again he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.” A third time Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But again, Elisha refused. So the two of them went on. Fifty of the prophets also went, and stood at some distance as the two were standing by the river. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, the two of them crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing. Yet, if you see me as I am being taken up, your request will be granted; if you do not see me, it will be denied." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"

When he could no longer see him, Elisha grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. Then he picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He rolled up the mantle of Elijah and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over on dry ground. This is the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 50

Out of Zion's perfect beauty shines the Lord* Our God keeps silence no longer.

Before God fires devour* Around the Lord the tempests rage.

Who calls on the heavens and the earth* To witness the judgment of the people.

Listen, my people, I will speak* Israel, I will testify against you.

I accuse you; I lay the charge before you* For I am God, your God..

But how can you recite my commandments* And take my covenant on your lips,

You who despise my law* And throw my words to the winds,

Who unbridle your mouths for evil* And whose tongues are plotting crime?

You do these things, and should I keep silence?* Do you think that I am like you?

Mark this, you who never think of God* Lest I seize you and you cannot escape;

A sacrifice of thanksgiving is what honors me* And I will show God's salvation only to the upright.

A Reading from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians – Chapter 4

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. For the gods of this world have blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. In truth we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the Word of the Lord.

Hymn 384 – Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son;
Thee will I cherish, thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling, starry host:
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOEuvLQ-Gy4>

A Reading from the Gospel According to Mark – Chapter 9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could ever bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be

here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what he could possibly mean. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is a pivotal moment, and the setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth. Clearly the antecedent for this story is in Elisha's experience as related in the Book of Kings six hundred years earlier. The three apostles are to understand that Jesus has taken over the "mantles" of both Moses and Elijah. Now he stands alone on Earth as "my son, the beloved."

"Don't tell anyone about this until after the resurrection," Jesus warns them, because only then will there be living proof of what you have seen. Although the reality of resurrection was inconceivable to them, Peter must have understood the experience as awakening to the presence of God among them. This way, he asserts in a letter, they were privileged to be eyewitnesses of God's glory. But Jesus did not change – he merely stood in a stronger light; his true identity was fully illuminated for them. And this revelation, whether by vision or some other means, is the beginning of the transformation of all who choose to follow him.

Thus the Transfiguration echoes Jesus' teaching that God is not "God of the dead, but of the living". Although Moses had died and Elijah had been taken up to heaven so long before, they are now alive again in the presence of the Son of God. That same continuation of life can apply to all who face death and have faith. We too can know the same truth – that we are beloved children – and that truth will set us free from whatever ills we undergo, and we too will be filled with awe. But this change will be frightening, there are barren deserts to be crossed and sometimes excruciating truths to be faced. And because such freedom is so unfamiliar, we will make mistakes. Life can be both awesome and awful.

That to be transformed is an unfamiliar, frightening, and therefore bad thing to do, is the fundamental untruth of the human condition; it is the lie

that keeps us enslaved. It is said that all sin is based on fear, and all fear is rooted in fear of death. But if we cooperate with the central force of nature, the power we call God, or Creation, or Love; if we persist in allowing this, the only true cosmic power to re-establish our true frame of reference, then we can reclaim and clarify the language we use to describe it. We can know that to be filled with awe – to be awe-full is a very good thing indeed.

The stories of our faith history – often called our salvation history -- enable us to conceptualize, contextualize and legitimize the stories we want to tell now. The presence of the prophets next to Jesus and the perceptions of the disciples have been the subject of much debate. In the third century CE, Origen commented that the presence of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets, effectively referring to the Torah. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther continued to see Moses and Elijah as the Law and the Prophets respectively, and their recognition of Jesus as a symbol of how Jesus fulfils the law and the prophets.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus is quoted as saying, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." In other words, there is no question of Jesus replacing or superceding the Word of God as received by Israel. Rather, God has chosen to become manifest in humankind in the person of Jesus to help us understand and accept the truth. Jesus is the embodiment of God's truth. He invites "anyone with ears to hear" to listen, imitate and be transformed.

No wonder good old Peter wanted to put up some all- weather shelters and preserve the moment permanently. It's something we have been doing ever since. But notice Jesus does not permit it. Instead he goes back to the work of healing. If we are transformed or metamorphosed, even if we start to shine and our garments glister, if we begin to be changed by our encounters with the living God, we too must resist the temptation to merely preserve the awareness of glory and awe, and instead get awe-full ourselves, employ this power for the work of healing one another; get out and get on with the job of rebuking unclean spirits, ourselves, while life and voice shall last.

Prayers

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing; Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted lifeless before you. Grant this for the sake of Jesus, who is Christ

our Lord, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

We pray for those who have died, especially Larry Henderson – are there others? -- for those who are ill and their loved ones, especially Yadira, John, Karen, Sharon and Jane; are there others? We pray for those who care for the sick, and those who work in science and medicine, especially Betsey, Lynn, John; are there others? Bless their hands and hearts and let them know we are grateful. **Amen.**

Bountiful God, source of the greatest good for all of us: Guide us in the right direction towards a better future for your creation. Help us to overcome our own limitations during this pandemic, and grant us steadfast love to look after each other. Give us humbleness of heart to accept that without you we cannot be real stewards of your creation. Show us ways to spread the gospel that will touch hearts and change minds for a better tomorrow for all humanity, the preservation of every creature, and the planet. We ask it all in the name of your beloved child. **Amen.**

Hymn 137 – O Wondrous Type, O Vision Fair Vss 1, 3 & 4

O wondrous type! O vision fair of glory that the church may share,
Which Christ upon the mountain shows,
Where brighter than the sun he glows!

With shining face and bright array, Christ deigns to manifest today
What glory shall be theirs above who joy in God with perfect love.

And faithful hearts are raised on high by this great vision's mystery;
For which in joyful strains we raise the voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVEX9Y3bH5o>

And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may the Lord's countenance be lifted up unto you and grant you peace. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer remain with you and those whom you hold in your heart, this day and forever. **Amen.**