

The Sunday Missive – February 27, 2022 The Eighth Sunday after The Epiphany

Hymn 362 Holy, holy, holy!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFePl5ioYQo>

Collect of the Day

Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us: 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 Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Exodus 34:29-35

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Psalm 99

The Lord is king; let all the peoples tremble* ***Who sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!***

The Lord is great in Zion* ***The Lord is exalted over all the peoples.***

Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity* ***You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.***

Moses and Aaron were among his priests* ***They cried to the Lord, who answered them.***

The Lord spoke to them in the pillar of cloud* ***They kept the Lord's decrees, and the statutes that God gave them.***

O Lord our God, you answered them* ***You were forgiving to them, but also an avenger of their wrongdoings.***

Then let us extol the Lord* ***And worship at God's holy mountain.***

Praise to the Creator and to the child* *And to the Holy Spirit.*

The God who was and is and is to come* *At the end of the ages, hallelujah!*

2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

Hymn 593 Lord, make us servants of your peace

Lord, make us servants of your peace:
Where there is hate, may we sow love;
Where there is hurt, may we forgive;
Where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;
Where all is gloom, may we sow hope;
Where all is night, may we sow light;
Where all is tears, may we sow joy.

Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek
To be consoled, but to console,
Nor look to understanding hearts,
But look for hearts to understand.

May we not look for love's return,
But seek to love unselfishly,
For in our giving we receive,
And in forgiving are forgiven.

Dying, we live, and are reborn
Through death's dark night to endless day;
Lord, make us servants of your peace,
To wake at last in heaven's light.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFePl5ioYQo>

Luke 9:28-43

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes

him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

Changed for the Better – Transfiguration C

The purpose of our lection and preaching of holy scripture is, in the elegant phrasing of Thomas Cranmer’s Advent collect, “...to hear them; to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life...” Part of what makes the Anglican part of the Church – of which we are an outpost -- is the *via media* (middle way), a means of describing the conviction that our beliefs and practices must derive from a thorough integration of scripture, tradition and reason. Though it is impossible to achieve perfect equilibrium, we are thought to be teaching and living heresy if we stress one of these three such that it obscures the others. Our way of achieving this balance involves tolerance of a wide spectrum of theological belief and traditional opinion, as well as bold and searching talk about how the stories of faith history enable us to think about, understand and formulate the stories of our own experience.

Today’s readings are a perfect example of the process of marking and digesting the old as a way of incorporating the new. If we would comprehend Jesus as the culmination of the law and the prophets, we would do well to show how he embodies the greatest attributes of traditional heroes of the faith. Moses represents the law, so Jesus on the mountaintop shines just like Moses. Elijah was the quintessential prophet; thus Jesus will be whooshed up into heaven like him.

So, when we get this great scene on the mountaintop, with the disciples seeing Jesus talk with Moses and Elijah we know what is symbolized, that he has all the attributes of the two of them combined. And we can discern what is meant by the story: He represents the

culmination of all the stories of the law and the prophets, and is now taking over from the rest of them in order to bring about the next era of humanity's relationship with God Almighty.

As is so often the case, baseball provides a tasty analogy for the scene up on Mount Tabor that day: Moses is the starting pitcher, laying down the law for the people and defeating their enemies, but he doesn't go all the way. Elijah is the manager, who foresees all that will happen, and has the entire confidence of the front office. And the two of them are out there at the top of the ninth, also known as "these latter days;" they're out there on the "mound" conferring, and handing the ball to Jesus, the reliever, the closer. Immediately, or 'straightway,' as the King James so perfectly puts it, Luke has Jesus demonstrating his true nature by defeating a nasty demon with a mere rebuke. Whereas all other scriptural heroes must suit their actions to their words, in Jesus, the action literally is the word, God's Word – Jesus' very self – is God's action.

Luke's literary touch is especially deft. Although we talk about today's feast as "The Transfiguration of Jesus," because the other two synoptic Gospels say he was transfigured (*metamorphoo* in the Greek), Luke describes the scene thusly: "The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white...Peter and his companions were very sleepy; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him." In other words, Jesus did not change, his appearance changed. He was not *metamorphooed*, rather, in Luke's view, Jesus' true identity became apparent to these people because they stayed awake. It was they who were transformed, by their new awareness of God. The implication is a powerful one: such an awareness, whether obtained by vision or experience or any other means, is the beginning of transformation for all who choose to follow Jesus to God. It is we who have metamorphosis in our future, if only we will embrace it.

It is as strange a scene as there is in the Gospels. Even without the voice from the cloud to explain it, they had no doubt what they were witnessing. It was Jesus of Nazareth all right, the man with whom they'd tramped many a dusty mile, whose mother and brothers they knew, the one they'd seen as hungry, tired, and footsore as the rest of them. But in the same moment, it was also the Messiah, the Christ, in

glory. The holiness of the man shone through his humanity; his face was so afire with it they were almost blinded.

Even with us something like that happens once in a while. The face of a woman walking with her child in the park, of a man lifting his grandchild or absently patting his dog; of people listening raptly to a concert, standing on the sand watching the waves roll in or just having a beer at a baseball game in July. Time and again, something so touching, so incandescent, so alive transfigures the human face that it's almost beyond bearing.

No wonder good old Peter wanted to put up some all-weather pop-ups to preserve the scene permanently. We love memorializing, making statues and plazas; it's something humans did long before Jesus, and we've continued doing it ever since. One stroll around Washington D.C. will prove the point. But notice Jesus does not permit it. Instead he goes right back to the work of healing. Jesus bypasses the suggestion that something be institutionalized, with new traditions established, instead insistently and relentlessly moving straight from scripture – the word of God – to reason, the love of neighbor.

When we who seek to follow Jesus to God are transformed or metamorphosed ourselves, even if we should start to shine and our garments begin to glisten, if we come to be changed by our encounters with the living God, we too must resist the temptation to merely preserve the awareness of power and glory and instead employ them for the work of healing one another; get out and start rebuking some demons ourselves. God knows there are plenty of them prowling around today, terrorizing the innocent, preying upon the weak, destroying the planet, spreading misinformation, fomenting violence, killing the world. Our hearts go out to their victims. As Oscar Romero put it, "Let us not forget: we are a pilgrim church, subject to misunderstanding, to persecution, but a church that walks serene because it bears the force of love. The Christian religion does not have a merely spiritualized meaning that overlooks the wretchedness that surrounds it. It is a looking at God, and from God at one's neighbor as a brother or sister, and an awareness that 'whatever you did to one of these, you did to me.'"

And as we go, let us heed Paul's admonition: let this energize us for the road ahead: Any of us, anytime can wake up and see the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces and be transformed from one degree of glory to another. It is by God's mercy that we are free to engage in ministry and solidarity with the oppressed, so we need never lose heart. In renouncing shameful things, in refusing to practice cunning or to falsify God's word, in our open insistence upon the truth, we will, in thought and word and deed commend ourselves to all in the sight of God.

Hymn 48 O day of radiant gladness

O day of radiant gladness, O day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness, most beautiful, most bright;
This day the high and lowly, through ages joined in tune,
Sing, "Holy, holy, holy," to the great God Triune.

This day at the creation, the light first had its birth;
This day for our salvation Christ rose from depths of earth;
This day our Lord victorious the Spirit sent from heaven,
And thus this day most glorious a triple light was given.

This day, God's people meeting, his Holy Scripture hear;
His living presence greeting, through bread and wine made near.
We journey on, believing, renewed with heavenly might,
From grace more grace receiving on this blest day of light.

That light our hope sustaining, we walk the pilgrim way,
At length our rest attaining, our endless Sabbath day.
We sing to thee our praises, O Father, Spirit, Son;
The Church her voice upraises to Thee, blest Three in One.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFePl5ioYQo>

Work

Yet life is not a vision nor a prayer,
But stubborn work; she may not shun her task.
After the first compassion, none will spare
Her portion and her work achieved, to ask.
She pleads for respite — she will come 'ere long
When, resting by the roadside, she is strong.

Nay, for the hurrying throng of passers-by
Will crush her with their onward-rolling stream.
Much must be done before the brief light die;
She may not loiter, rapt in the vain dream.
With unused trembling hands, and faltering feet,
She staggers forth, her lot assigned to meet.

But when she fills her days with duties done,
Strange vigour comes, she is restored to health.
New aims, new interests rise with each new sun,
And life still holds for her unbounded wealth.
All that seemed hard and toilsome now proves small,
And naught may daunt her — she hath strength for all.

Emma Lazarus