

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Transfiguration Sunday February 14, 2021



Morning Meditation

“You can change the place you live, your clothes, your interests, your friends, your religion and even your partner. However, if you forgot to change your mind, attitude, beliefs about the world, how you treat people and how you plan to be different this time around, why did you even bother?”

— Shannon L. Alder

Welcome and News of the Church

Statement of Welcome

**No matter who I am, No matter where I am on life’s journey, I am welcome here.
No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life’s journey,
You are welcome here!**

Statement of Purpose

One: Who are you?

All: I am a beloved child of God!

One: What does that mean?

All: I am a person of worth to be valued!

One: Then what will you do?

All: I will live a life of Love and Acceptance of myself and all God’s people!

- ❖ **Our service** will be *live streamed* each time we meet. The service is also recorded and will be available later for viewing from our web page and Facebook. To view our service on the website click on the link: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>
- ❖ **Our *From the Heart Offering* in February is for Souper Bowl of Caring for the Food Shelf.**

The Call

The mighty one, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: ‘Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!’

The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge.

Prelude

Stacy Pauly

Call to Community

One: Gathering in this sacred place we anticipate new wonders each week.

All: Wherever two or three are gathered to worship, a holy spirit is present.

One: Open our eyes to witness the fantastic love and wondrous joy waiting to be revealed, even this day, even in this place.

All: We will want to linger and camp in this sanctuary but when we leave today may our hearts be open to all the wonders of God’s beautiful world.

Piano: play through once

People: We have come at Christ's own bidding to this high and holy place,
Where we wait with hope and longing for some token of God's grace.
Here we pray for new assurance that our faith is not in vain,
Searching like those first disciples for a sign both clear and plain.

Piano: play stanza 3b, 4, 5

People: Light breaks through our clouds and shadows, splendor bathes the flesh-
joined Word, Moses and Elijah marvel as the heavenly voice is heard.
Eyes and hearts behold with wonder how the Law and Prophets meet;
Christ with garments drenched in brightness, stands transfigured and
complete.

Piano: play stanza 3b, 4, 5

People: Strengthened by this glimpse of glory, fearful lest our faith decline,
We, like Peter, find it tempting to remain and build a shrine.
But true worship gives us courage to proclaim what we profess,
That our daily lives may prove us people of the God we bless.

Piano: play stanza 3b, 4, 5

Invocation

O Holy One,
on mountaintops and valley floors you reveal to us the light of your love.
Our hearts desire is to bask in the amazing glory of the divine presence.
With each encounter we are changed and transformed.
Draw us nearer that we might receive a double portion of your Holy Spirit.
Help us, O Holy One, to live our lives as a reflection of divine glory.
May we walk among our siblings and friends as a blessing,
bearing light into dark places,
hope to displace despair,
and love that casts out hate.
Our world is hurting and we need the followers of Jesus to follow more closely.
Maybe then we will hear your voice speaking to us and saying,
... "listen to my Child, the Beloved!" Amen.

Piano Doxology

Scripture

Mark 9:2-9

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 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 any more, 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.

Sermon

"A Look at the Puzzle"

I need a three-letter word for "dedicatory poem." ODE
I need a four-letter word for balm ingredient. ALOE

If you are a crossword puzzle aficionado you know that there are certain commonly used words that are a key to solving any puzzle.

Balm, salve, ointment is always ALOE
Any kind of poem is always ODE
Asian holiday of any kind is TET
Reference to any cookie is OREO
Pick, choose, select is always OPT
Any fermented refreshment is always ALE

These are keys to working any puzzle. The more you work on puzzles, the more you learn these key words and the easier the puzzles become to solve. Sometimes!

Our passage today, the Transfiguration of Jesus, is a very interesting and complicated passage to read and understand. So many terms that make you go "Huh?" Definitely a puzzle.

Today I want to look at some of these key phrases and see if we can unlock a clearer message that Mark brings to us.

The passage starts with "Six days later." Six days later than what? If we look at the passage prior to our text today, we find the account of Jesus asking his disciples what people are saying as to Jesus' identity. They reply, John the Baptist, Elijah, other prophets. And then he asks them, "Who do you say that I am?"

Here we need a seven-letter word for Jesus. Peter says "You are the **Messiah**."

And Peter was right. But Peter had no idea what he was saying. His concept of a Messiah, as was the concept of most Israelites, was that of a conquering hero. So when Jesus, the Messiah, began to talk about how he must "undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders... and be killed, and after three days rise again," Peter said "No" that is not who the Messiah is!

Six days later. . . Jesus took Peter along with James and John up the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, "transformed into something more beautiful or elevated."

His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them!

Here we need a 15-letter phrase for dazzling white clothes. **Glimpse of Heaven**.

The dazzling garments were to connect them with the robes worn in heaven. Jesus was leading them to this eternal glory.

Then appeared Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus. Now Elijah and Moses both had interesting accounts of their deaths. There is no death scene for Elijah, he was just taken up to Heaven. It is like God and Elijah were out walking and when night came they were closer to God's house than to Elijah's so Elijah just went home with God.

Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, was able to look over into it but was not able to go in because he died on the mountain, and was buried somewhere, the scriptures says, where no one knows.

But the reason the key to understanding why Elijah and Moses were on the mountain of Transfiguration is that Elijah was considered the greatest of prophets, and Moses, the giver of the Ten Commandments, represented the law. So we have two people who represent all the known scripture of the day.

Here we need a 14-letter phrase for Moses and Elijah **Law and Prophets**

Peter says, WOW, this is amazing, let's build small dwellings so that we all might have places to stay on this mountain top.

Here is a 22-letter phrase for **I want this to last forever!**

Then there appeared a cloud. Clouds happen a lot in the Bible when people are up on holy mountains. They announce that God is present, the mist prevents them from seeing God.

Here we need a five-letter word for presence of God: **Cloud**

From the cloud, God speaks, "This is my Son, The Beloved; listen to him!" Hang on to this statement and we will look at it in a moment.

As soon as God speaks, the cloud disappears and all that is left from the moment is Jesus back in his regular clothes and a wide-eyed Peter, James and John.

Here we have an 11-letter phrase for **What was that?**

To sum up, Jesus asks the disciples who he is, takes them to a mountain, the disciples get a glimpse of heaven standing with the VIPs of the faith representing the fulfillment of the law and prophets where the disciples want to stay forever. The presence of God is experienced and they have a spiritual awakening, This is my son so listen to him! And then it is back down the mountain.

God tells them to listen to what Jesus has to say.

And what does Jesus say? The Messiah of God is not a conqueror, he is a human that must suffer and die, like all humans....and will rise again on the third day. Listen when he speaks of these things.

Have you ever had a mountain top experience? Maybe not with clouds and visions and hearing the voice of God, but in a moment that clarity comes and you understand a portion of life in a new way and more fully.

When I was a pastor in Oklahoma I participated as a director/counselor at a church camp in Colorado. In Oklahoma we would start in the South East corner of the state and pick up high school students across the state in a couple of school busses as we journeyed north west to Colorado. Our destination was a rustic camp on a mountain where would spend a week of activities together without electricity except in the kitchen. We would go tubing down the river, go on hikes and study scriptures and experience a close community of strangers who eventually became best of friends.

One activity each year was a hike up to the continental divide. It was a challenging hike and along the way you heard complaints of "How much further? Can't we stop? Can I just go back to camp?" Then we would reach the top. Standing on the top where you could look forever to the west and forever to the east. The complaints stopped. Silence prevailed. After a moment we would have a brief moment of reflection on the wonders of God's creation, and then begin the trek back down the mountain. The campers did not want to leave. Can't we stay just a bit longer in this holy place?

The trip down was filled with silence, except for comments of awe and beauty. Comments of how God has blessed us with greatness that is beyond words.

Yes, we did have to come down the mountain back to the daily routine of the week. But even the daily routine was experienced differently, because we had been on the mountain.

In that one hike, we had to understand who we believed God to be. A thrill that we didn't want to leave, and understanding of the greatness of God and in the silence learned to listen to the still small voice.

Confession of Our Humanness

Forgive us, God, when we linger too long by the waters, and on the mountain tops, enthralled with the glory that flows from you. When we fail to listen to your voice, leading and guiding us, shake us from our contentment and send us forward endowed with your power. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The God of Elijah, the God of Moses and the God of Jesus desires mercy more than sacrifice, and a contrite heart rather than burnt offerings. Love God and do the right thing and forgiveness shall be your friend and mercy your true companion. **Amen.**

Call to the Table

Sharing the Elements

Prayer after Communion (unison)

Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the body of Christ, and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink. Now send us forth to be your people in the world. Grant us strength to persevere in resisting evil, and to proclaim in all we say and do your Good News in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Communion Hymn *"As We Gather at Your Table"* vs. 3 NCH #332

Piano: Play through hymn

**People: Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast
Where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and least.
There no more will envy bind us nor will pride our peace destroy,
As we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.**

Piano: Play stanza 3, 4

Benediction

Now may the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" and has shone in our hearts, give us light to bear to the world that all may see and know that God is love. **Amen.**

Postlude

Stacy Pauly



Remember in Prayer: Sandy Wentzloff, Bill and Nancy Cowell, Dick Carlson, Eunice Gasow, Aggie Schue, and Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother). We pray for health and healing for all people. Pray especially for those serving on the front lines caring for those with COVID-19. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

Our sympathy and prayers go to the family and friends of Paul Schue who passed away on January 29th.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com • Website at listen2god.org

Tithes, Offerings and Pledges can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334. You can also donate on our website or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.