

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Transfiguration Sunday – February 14th, 2021

Prelude: “Deep River” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday – The start of the Season of Lent. We will be offering an Ash Wednesday Service at 10 am for those who wish to join us on Zoom. The Service will be downloaded by 9 am on the South Buxton website on Ash Wednesday for you to view or read.

For those who order the Broadview (the United Church’s magazine) from the South Buxton Pastoral Charge, 2021 Subscriptions are due the end of February. Envelopes have been distributed or mailed to those on our list. If you wish to receive a copy and you are not on the list, please contact me at 519-689-7555. Thank – you.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call To Worship:

Eric: We come to this place expecting God to meet us,

People: to remind us of God’s enduring presence, with us and within us.

Eric: Let’s take a moment to acknowledge God and the strength to worship within each of us.

Opening Prayer:

God of fire and rain, you call us to you, you call on the soil beneath our feet, and it rises; you pull on our heartstrings, and our chests heave at the sound of your voice. Draw us near your merciful justice; we ache to be comforted by your presence. Set us apart from whatever would inhibit our most fervent adoration. Amen.

Scripture: Mark 9: 2 – 9 – “A Mountaintop Experience”

It was an early spring morning. The fields were covered with wildflowers when Jesus asked James, John, and Peter to join him on a walk up the mountainside. As they climbed higher and higher, the Sea of Galilee below looked like a shimmering piece of glass. By the time they reached the top, they were ready for a rest. James, John, and Peter settled on some rocky ground in the shade of some trees. Half asleep, they noticed Jesus heading off to a place not far away.

Jesus raised his arms and began to pray. Suddenly, before their eyes, Jesus' appearance changed. The three friends squinted and felt quite dizzy at the sight. Jesus' face shone brightly like the midday sun, and his clothes turned a dazzling white. Then two other shining figures (it looked like Moses and Elijah) appeared and began talking with Jesus. "Jesus, what should we do?" exclaimed Peter in terror. "It is good that we are here. Perhaps we should make three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

But as Peter was speaking, a misty cloud rolled over the mountain and came down upon them, and the rest of the words on Peter's lips failed him. From somewhere inside the cloud, they heard a voice saying, "This is my beloved. I love him. Listen to him."

Peter collapsed on the ground and lay trembling. James and John fell down on either side of him. They were all terrified. Slowly the cloud lifted. Timidly, they looked up but saw only Jesus standing before them. Jesus called each of them by name, gently touched them on the shoulders, and told them not to be afraid.

As the sun set, and they descended the mountain, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone what they had seen, or what they had heard. And for the rest of their journey down the mountain, James, John, and Peter puzzled over what this could mean.

Opening Hymn: VU 327 "All Praise to Thee"

- 1 All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine,
didst yield the glory that of right was thine,
that in our troubled hearts thy grace might shine:
hallelujah; hallelujah!

- 5 Let every tongue confess with one accord
in heaven and earth that Jesus Christ is Lord;
and God eternal be by all adored:
hallelujah; hallelujah!

Message: "In the Clouds"

Today's message is from a retired minister, Reverend Donna Mann from Elora, Ontario. Donna is a Colleague on the Executive of the United Church Rural Ministry Network. Last September, we held a Zoom Workshop about, "How COVID changed Church". Donna provided the worship based on the Transfiguration. After Donna shares her thoughts, I will share some of mine. Enjoy!

How many of us have sat in small rural churches and said Peter's exact words, "It is good to be here." We look around at the structure. Perhaps it resembles the church of your childhood. We remember people, incidents and teachings that have become a part of us over time. And in some way, we see the love of Jesus, the law and the words of the prophets, right there within view. Perhaps like Peter sitting

with his friends, James and John, we sit beside those with whom we've prayed, talked in meetings or walked in the footprints of Jesus in Scripture study.

And maybe, just maybe, something is going on at a different level that we miss. Maybe during the confusion, we want to fix the situation, perhaps solve the problem.

Matthew tells us in the middle of Jesus' transfiguration, and Moses and Elijah's conversations with Jesus, and a voice speaking from the cloud (that's a lot happening) that Peter offers to make three shelters. Mark followed this incident in his gospel with the words, 'For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid.' Luke remarked in his writing after Peter offered to make three booths that, "He didn't know what he'd said."

Peter may get blamed for wanting to wrap this up, offer a quick fix, perhaps to what he sees as confusing. I can identify with that sort of decision-making. "Let's look at our options, choose one and then seek out what's next on the agenda." And while we tend to take some kind of control of what seems confusing, we run the risk that something very holy and inspiring is happening in clouds and fog in our mind—something we don't understand yet we know as sacred. The shift in this scripture lifts us a notch to a new experience and understanding.

After all, the old and new covenant - the past and the present with a glimpse of eternity is in view.

But, let's consider that Peter perhaps made his offer when he saw an opportunity to prepare for the holy ones. 'I will make three booths here, one for you (Jesus) and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' Can't you see him applauding in his excitement? Notice he didn't include himself here. Perhaps he saw it as a gift to the others. I sense he would say that, in awe of the company he was keeping. Imagine Jesus, the risen Lord, along with Moses embodying the law and Elijah reminding them of the prophets—who wouldn't want to stay in this company even if you had to sit outside the booth or tent?

In a time of confusion in 2020, when conversations, relationships, activity and history changes before our eyes, can we miss something of what's going on around us. Can we be so busy thinking or planning and miss the point? We might not like someone to quickly make an offer that doesn't fit in our picture. And somehow, at times, it might not be a bad idea to want to stay in the company of Jesus and be reminded of the law while listening to a prophet. Is there a balance here? And can we use any of it in our rural situation?

Will God show us, and will we see the movement of the Spirit and have the wisdom to follow? Can we ask the Spirit to grant us the wisdom to see the big picture over and above what is visible to us?

(By Reverend Donna Mann – Zoom Workshop, “Coming Together While Apart: Being Church During COVID-19” - September 29th, 2020).

Many Protestant denominations celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus on the Sunday preceding Lent. The revealing of Jesus’ glory marks the end of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and the beginning of his ministry toward Jerusalem. Mark describes Jesus’ transfiguration, and along with the disciples we sense that sacred moment; we will see things in a new way from this time forward. This Sunday being Transfiguration Sunday is also the last Sunday of Epiphany – the Transfiguration may just be that last surprise (the Epiphany) before we get to work readying ourselves for Lent and Easter.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to Mount Hermon. On the mountain, Jesus’ appearance is transfigured – Jesus shines. The voice here describes Jesus in the same terms used when he was baptized. Then the disciples see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. This connects Jesus to the Hebrew Scriptures, and to the stories of Moses’ face being transfigured on Mount Sinai when he was in God’s presence and received the Law. Elijah also experienced God’s presence on Sinai, and we know that Elijah was carried up to heaven in a flaming chariot pulled by fiery horses. Elijah’s return will announce the coming of the Messiah. For Mark, Jesus fulfills the work of the Law **and** the prophets.

Mark uses symbolism that would have been so familiar to the disciples. The transfiguration, clouds and light would have been the expected way for a deity to demonstrate dominion. That is why Peter responds as he does. The Messiah is finally acting like a lightning-toting, flame-wielding, cloud-veiled god for once. This is just like when Elisha watched Elijah disappear into the clouds!

Okay now we are getting somewhere! If only Jesus could come here with all that glory, clouds and light. Everyone would take notice. COVID has side railed us from doing so much in Church – or at least in the church building. What are we doing as the Church? In you, and in me, and all our Church friends? We can’t build a shelter (or tabernacle – as “shelter” loosely translates to). Even if we did, no one can come to see it or go inside to be with Jesus. Jesus tells Peter he does not want or need a shelter. Jesus can live anywhere – especially in our hearts and minds.

So do we need a building for Jesus? If Jesus can live anywhere, and especially in our hearts and minds – well then I guess not. That does not mean that our church buildings are not needed. We as the “Church” do need a place to gather and share together. That is why we have our church buildings. And that is what we miss so

much right now in the Pandemic. But we do know that one day in the future our buildings will be open again and we will once again gather to share in food and community and with Communion, Baptisms and weddings. One day, we will once again be the Church in the church. Until then, let us be the Church right where we are! We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 336 “Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies”

- 1 Christ whose glory fills the skies,
Christ the true, the only light,
 sun of righteousness, arise,
 triumph o'er the shades of night.
Dayspring from on high, be near;
daystar, in my heart appear.
- 2 Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee;
 joyless is the day's return,
 till thy mercy's beams I see,
till they inward light impart,
glad my eyes and warm my heart.
- 3 Visit then this soul of mine,
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
 fill me, radiancy divine,
 scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we see the Majesty of the Clouds and all of Creation - let us give in Love.

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

God of glory, it is good for us to be in this place, to find shelter, to mark the occasion of your presence among us, to know that we are full of hope and aching with desire for you to stay with us, comfort us and provide the wisdom we need. In this, we offer ourselves fully. We offer

time, talent, treasure. We offer one another the best of what we have to give and know you will know just how to use it for your glory. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: In the shadows of this world, working for a politic of justice;

People: in the hunger of your people, speaking out for trade rules that are fair. May we be people of the transfiguration.

Eric: In the conflict of the world, living lives of peace;

People: in the prejudice of our traditions, speaking words of inclusion and acceptance. May we be people of the transfiguration.

Eric: In the grieving of your people, being the presence of hope;

People: in the propaganda of the nations, being the way of truth. May we be people of the Transfiguration.

Eric: In the living of the faith, being the community of love;

People: in the needs of your people, being the hands of heaven. May we be people of the transfiguration.

Eric: In the bad news of the papers, being the good news of God;

People: in the ordinariness of the world, being the presence of your glory.

Eric: May we be people of the transfiguration, as we pray Jesus' prayer...

Our Father, Who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us,

And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction:

Eric: We may fail - God does not. We may end - God does not. We are blessed and a blessing, now and forever more.

Postlude: "Hymn to Freedom" by Oscar Peterson – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.

It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as "In the Spirit We Are One".

Cancer:	Wayne	Sharon	Willie & Gisele
	Karen	Ken	Branson &
	Jasmine	June	Erika
	Tom	Melonie	Etna
	Randy	Susan	Earl
	George	Zoe	COVID testing
Special:	Richard	Ingrid	McKeon Family
	Cleata	Jerri	