**Transfiguration Sunday**

**Nora Pederberg and Susanne Guenther Loewen**

**March 3, 2019**

Welcome and Announcements – explanation of service (Nora)

Good Morning. We meet for our worship service this morning on Treaty 6 Territory, and the tradition home land of the Métis.

This morning we honour transfiguration Sunday. A day to witness the sacred, and remember the wonder of life with Christ. To mark this Sunday we will spend the service taking in the Scripture texts and offering up prayers and reflections in response to these writings.

To center us in this practice please turn to the back of your Sing the Journey to #137 and we will read in unison:

O Holy One,

we hear and say so many words,

yet yours is the word we need.

Speak now,

and help us listen;

and, if what we hear is silence,

let it quiet us,

let it disturb us,

let it touch our need,

let it break our pride,

let it shrink our certainties,

let it enlarge our wonder. AMEN

Invocation:

[Psalm 99](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=116#psalm_reading)  (Robert Alter translation)

The Lord reigns – peoples tremble,

enthroned upon cherubim – the earth shakes.

The Lord is great in Zion

and exalted over all the peoples.

They acclaim your name:

"Great and fearful,

He is holy.

And with a king's strength He loves justice."

You firmly founded righteousness,

judgment and justice in Jacob You made.

Exalt the Lord our God

and bow down to His footstool.

He is holy.

Moses and Aaron among His priests

and Samuel among those who call on his name

called the Lord and He answered them.

In a pillar of cloud did He speak to them.

They kept His precepts and the statute He gave them.

Lord our God, it was You Who answered them,

a forbearing God You were to them,

yet an avenger of their misdeeds.

Exalt the Lord our God

and bow to His holy mountain,

for the Lord our God is holy.

Peace Lamp: When Glory – Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace*, p. 85

That when glory comes,

we will open our eyes

to see it.

That when glory shows up,

we will let ourselves be overcome

not by fear

but by the love

it bears.

That when glory shines,

we will bring it

back with us

all the way,

all the way,

all the way down.

Offering – Prayer (Nora)

*Sing the Story #148 adapted*

Lord God, you ask us to love you

with all we possess.

Today we bring our minds to you,

just as they are:

open and closed; clear and confused;

pure and sullied; brilliant and slow.

We offer our minds

in all their complexity,

wonder, and power.

Rekindle them.

Remind us how to love you

with all of our being.

Out Mind, Our Body, and Our possessions. AMEN

Children's Time: Exodus story (Susanne)

[**Exodus 34:29-35**](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=116#hebrew_reading)   (The Inclusive Bible)

As Moses came down from Mount Sinai carrying the two tablets of the Covenant, he was not aware that the skin on his face was radiant from speaking with God. When Aaron and the other Israelites saw Moses, they were afraid to approach him because of the radiance of the skin of his face. Only when Moses called to them did Aaron and the leaders of the community draw near, and then Moses spoke to them.

Later, all the Israelites gathered around, and Moses gave them the instructions he had received from YHWH on Mount Sinai. When he had finished speaking to them, Moses put a veil over his face. Whenever Moses entered the presence of YHWH, he would remove the veil until he came out again, and when he would come out and tell the Israelites what had been commanded, they would see that the skin on his face was radiant. Then he would put the veil over his face again until he went in to speak with God.

Response: Dazzling – Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace*, p. 83-84

Believe me, I know

how tempting it is

to remain inside this blessing,

to linger where everything

is dazzling

and clear.

We could build walls around this blessing,

put a roof over it.

We could bring in

a table, chairs

have the most amazing meals.

We could make a home.

We could stay.

But this blessing

is built for leaving.

This blessing

is made for coming down

the mountain.

This blessing

wants to be in motion,

to travel with you

as you return

to level ground.

It will seem strange

how quiet this blessing becomes

when it returns to earth.

It is not shy.

It is not afraid.

It simply knows

how to bide its time,

to watch and wait,

to discern and pray

until the moment comes

when it will reveal

everything it knows,

when it will shine forth

with all it has seen,

when it will dazzle

with the unforgettable light

you have carried

all this way.

[**Luke 9:28-36**](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=116#gospel_reading)(First Nations Version)

The Mountain Where He Shined

About eight days later Creator Sets Free (Jesus) took Stands On The Rock (Peter), He Takes Over (James), and He Shows Goodwill (John) up on a mountain to be alone and pray. As he was sending his voice to the Great Spirit, the appearance of his face began to change and his clothes turned white as snow.

Two men appeared and began to talk with him. One was the prophet of old, Great Spirit Is Creator (Elijah), and the other, the ancient lawgiver Drawn From The Water (Moses). They were shining like the sun and were talking to him about his crossing over from this life to the next, that would take place in Village of Peace (Jerusalem).

Stands On The Rock (Peter) and the others were deep asleep, but they woke up and shook the sleep from their eyes. They saw Creator Sets Free (Jesus) with is face and clothes shining. They also saw the two men standing with him. As the men with him turned to go, Stands On The Rock (Peter) spoke *without thinking*, "Wisdomkeeper!" he said. "This is a good place to stay. Let's make three tipis – one for you, one for Drawn From The Water (Moses) and one for Great Spirit Is Creator (Elijah)."

While he was saying this, a bright cloud from above began to fall on them. Their knees shook as the cloud surrounded them. A voice spoke from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, the one I have chosen – listen to him!"

When the voice finished speaking, they saw Creator Sets Free (Jesus) standing there alone in front of them. After this they kept silent and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Reflection:  (Susanne)

Transfiguration is not one of the “high holidays” of the church year. Many of us don’t think about this Sunday much, aside from it being the last Sunday before the season of Lent begins. And the story itself – of Jesus going up on a mountain, and glowing and changing and communing with ghosts – well, it seems a little too fantastical, a little too supernatural for our rational, scientific culture. As I’ve dug into these Scripture texts over the past couple of weeks, as Nora and I have been working on this service, I’ve gotten more and more into them. Yes, I know I’m a huge Bible nerd but these passages really do have a profound significance.

We use these stories to mark the last Sunday before Lent – that is, before we begin to walk with Jesus toward the cross of Good Friday. And here we have Jesus withdrawing to pray with three of his disciples, who fall asleep – does this sound familiar to anyone? Doesn’t this sound like a parallel to the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus’ preparation for the crucifixion and suffering he knows are coming? But whereas that story has the disciples falling asleep and not waking up when Jesus needs them, here they awake and see this strange vision of Jesus glowing with Elijah and Moses beside him.

So what is the significance of this somewhat bizarre story? Well, transfiguration is related to transformation. In this story, Jesus is being surrounded – or even anointed – with the radiant presence of God, and is met in that experience by Moses – often associated with the Law or Torah – and Elijah – one of the most famous prophets. Remember, at this time, “the Law and the Prophets” was the Jewish way of referring to Scripture, or to the Bible. So here, Jesus is being associated with the fulfillment of Scripture and is also claimed by the very voice of God as the chosen child of God. In other words, Jesus is here given the authority of Scripture and a close relationship with the Divine.

And this is a transformative experience for Jesus, as well as for his disciples who are looking on as witnesses. And Peter wants to remain in that transformative moment, to capture it and settle down in it. But that is not what is required of them. Instead, they share the transformative power of God’s presence with everyone.

Lent has sometimes been understood as a time of penance – of sacrifice and deprivation, as if that’s what God requires of us, as if we’re not good enough for God. I don’t think a whole lot of good has come out of that view of Christian faith. The need for transformation isn’t based on some idea that we are not worthy the way we are. But we know that all is not well with our world. We know we live in a broken world and that the need for healing and peace are profound. And yet, Jesus’ message to us is that we are all worthy of bearing the image of God – we are all children of God, and when we live that out, our lives and actions shine with God’s presence.

This Lent, we are embarking on the theme of Naming Our Fears. While this might seem like a strange worship theme, there is in fact much in the Bible that speaks to the fears we have – fear of vulnerability, fear of the future, fear of “the other,” fear of failure, fear of aging, suffering, and death, to name just a few. When we bury these fears deep down inside of ourselves and avoid them, they tend to control us, and surface in unexpected, unhelpful, unhealthy ways. But when we face them and name them out loud – especially before God and the community of faith and love that is the church, we find that they begin to lose their grip on us. Fear loses its power when we find it is shared. In this way, naming and facing our fears can actually bring us together as a community and transform our fears into something we have in common, something through which we can support and comfort each other.

And this makes sense, in light of the Transfiguration – that we who follow the transfigured and transformed One, the One who transformed even death, would become for ourselves, each other, and the world – a transformed and transforming community that shines with the very presence of God. AMEN

[**2 Corinthians 3:16-4:2**](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=116#epistle_reading)  (The Message)

Whenever, though, they turn and face God as Moses did, God removes the veil and there they are – face-to-face! They suddenly recognize that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiseled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognized as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of [God'] face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like [God].

Since God has so generously let us in on what [God] is doing, we're not about to throw up our hands and walk off the job just because we run into occasional hard times. We refuse to wear masks and play games. We don't maneuver and manipulate behind the scenes. And we don't twist God's Word to suit ourselves. Rather, we keep everything we do and say out in the open, the whole truth on display, so that those who want to can see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.

Response - Joys & Concerns and Congregational Prayer (Nora)

God you thank you that you are present among us. As we enter into our congregational prayer, we lift up to you the joys and concerns from our own congregation.

*Words of Worship 2*

Loving Mother-Father God,

thank you for gathering us together -

all of us beautiful, bumbling followers of your Son.

As we hear anew the story of sleepy Peter, James, and John

with radiant Jesus on the mountain,

awaken us to the voice of your Spirit

and to the bring wonder of your vision for our lives

in this community and all of creation.

Like Peter, we are often preoccupied with the mundane,

or we get lost in the clouds

We miss the point. We don't see the big picture

of who you are,

what you're doing,

and what you are saying.

Forgive us, we pray.

Knowing that you delight in forgiveness

and care about our preoccupations and dreams, we pour our joys and concerns into your hands.

Hear and receive our spoken and unspoken prayers, O God.

Knowing that you transform illness to health,

confusion to clarity, violence to peace, ashes to beauty, we thank you for hearing our prayers.

Open our awareness this day to your Spirit dancing among us.

Amen.

Communion Liturgy (Nora and Susanne)

Benediction *(Sing the Story 156)*

1: The face we have known now shines like the sun.

*2: A voice says, “My Beloved; I am pleased with my own.”*

**All: With faces unveiled, we see God’s glory shine.**

1: Jesus calls, “Get up and do not be afraid.”

*2: In the Spirit, we, too, are beloved, transformed.*

**All: From glory to glory, we are beloved – we shine.** AMEN