

Would you believe, we skipped over Transfiguration Sunday, which is usually just before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. I think the talk of war with Venezuela and war with Iran did get most of my attention. In such dark days, it is hard to meditate on something like transfiguration: Shining Light, Divine Radiance.

But every Sunday in Christian thought is a day for rest and renewal, a day of thanksgiving and worship...so I think it is good even in the middle of Lent to take a break from themes of suffering and sacrifice, and just meditate for awhile on Light, that the faithfulness, goodness, and mercy of God will “follow us all the days of our lives” as Psalm 23 claims! We can indeed rest even exult in the many good things of God.

So Jesus took a few disciples up to a mountain top, and while he was praying, Jesus began to shine with light! Peter gives “testimony” to this later, saying “we were eyewitnesses to this glory!” Do we have any reason to think that Peter would make up such a story?... the same Peter that was also crucified for being a follower of Jesus? It is reminiscent of Moses going to the top of Mount Sinai for 40 days, and each time he came down his face was shining... so much so that he would put a veil over his face for a time in order not to frighten the people. I do not know of any Jews who question that Moses had a very special relationship with God, that Moses’ face shone with light.

Yes, the transfigurations of Moses and Jesus do seem fantastic, hard to believe. Though if we think for a moment, I’ll bet we all have met very kind, loving people who do have a bit of a glow in their face; and Jesus did challenge us to shine light for the world like a lamp. Most Christian sermons I have read or heard suggest that we get at least “glimpses” of the Divine Glory of God... maybe an unexpected “epiphany,” a surprising

wondrous experience, or amazing grace, that we can call the “presence” of God. All of us are searching for God, or for “evidences” of God, since there can never be scientific “proof” of God’s existence. Many people use the word “testimony” to tell of experiences that they consider to be the presence of God.

In anticipation of this sermon, I decided to visit with some Christian Science friends, in their Wednesday night “testimony” worship service. While I don’t follow all their beliefs or practices, I do respect their tenaciously positive outlook on life. Obviously, the experiences people relate have a very subjective interpretation about how they experienced healing through prayer. One person told of a chronic headache that was relieved in the middle of the night with prayer rather than Tylenol. Another person told of a friend recovering from addiction which took considerable rehab time and much prayer. One could argue that what happened was simply the “power of positive thinking” to use a famous phrase of NY minister Norman Vincent Peale. But wait a minute, couldn’t that “power” actually be the spiritual workings of prayer and meditation... the focusing on all that is good, full of light and love ... all of which are words for “God?” I like to recall that the shortest definition of God in the Bible says “God is Love ... and he who abides in Love abides in God” On the question of belief, We might as well say that if one believes in Love, one believes in God! (1John4:16)

A common approach to The Transfiguration of Christ, is focusing on the reality that they did have to come down the mountain, to everyday struggles and life! We cannot live with a mountaintop experience all the time. We can’t feel bright and cheery all the time, joy or euphoria all the time. People in the spotlight, like our Irish band last night, can’t feel never-ending

applause from the crowd ... they too have to go home and wash dishes and face everyday work or conflicts. Many Christian commentators go right from thinking about the mountaintop transfiguration to the Cross of Christ. The idea is that we need the moments of glory, light, or euphoria, to help us endure the crosses or sufferings in this life that everyone has to face.

A “transfiguration” of light and glory, mountaintop experiences, while fleeting and occasional, point to the possibility of “transformation” for us on a daily basis. Those occasional experiences are like “fuel for our faith.” And telling and hearing about them, as in “testimony,” can help our faith and give us courage. The Israelites needed to know that Moses had a close experience with God. The disciples needed to know that Jesus was full of Divine Light. And we need to tell and hear about what we experience as the “presence” of God.

We could describe transformation as a time of healing, and this is not just healing for the body. We know that healing of the body is very complex, often involving doctors and medicines, for most of us, but surely the medicine of the spirit as well. Norman Vincent Peale, and Christian Science testimony are a kind of “mind over matter.” The power of the mind and spirit can be huge in healing. The power of hospital visitors bearing flowers and gifts, or holding a hand, is not to be underestimated.

And that leads me to another part of our Transfiguration story, when the disciples hear the words: “This is my beloved Son, *Listen* to him!” God’s glory and light can be more fully known as we *Listen* to Jesus. It is a good thing to meditate on the stories and words of Jesus. With Jesus, emphasis on Love is so clear... If Jesus commands us to Love all our neighbors as children of God, then we have to open our eyes more, and open

our ears more, to really listen to them. Listening is part of healing, for both parties...since when we listen more, we understand more, and mutual understanding creates more peace and love.

We are all guilty of talking at people, or interrupting people, or insisting on our own point of view... there is so much spiritual sickness, emotional sickness... so the voice in the cloud saying "Listen to Him" is so important. When we Listen to Jesus, we listen for the words of Love, for the words that say Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, Blessed are the humble. We also listen more closely to the very people who are poor, who mourn, who are humble and perhaps oppressed.

We, like the disciples, have to come down to earth, down to everyday struggles and conflicts. But we of faith... trust that the glory of light and love can dwell in us more deeply, that we can indeed be changed from glory into glory. We trust that peace and love and joy can indeed spread. We believe we can be raised up; We believe that goodness, love, friendship is available to us at all times if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. ("When your down, and troubled, and you need a helping hand... You've got a friend... OR as a spiritual presence: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear") When we listen to Jesus' words, we listen to the Spirit giving us intuition, guidance and comfort, and when we listen more intently to our friends and neighbors, we listen and look for the sparks of light and love that can shine upon and warm our friendship. May it be so. Amen.