

Sermon- St. Andrew Feb 19, 2023, Transfiguration

Matt 17:1-9; Exodus 24:12-18

Dear Fellow ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

Grace and Peace to you from God our creator and from
the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer and Guide. Amen

The Good news for today is that the Gospel reading of Jesus on the mountaintop is a **Sustaining vision** as we now walk to Jerusalem, Holy Week and Easter.

When this was written, the early church was trying to figure out if members of the Christian church needed to become Jewish first, and were also contending with the continuing Roman Occupation. They needed to be sustained. So do we.

This is a challenging text— Jesus and three disciples go up to the top of a mountain, where Jesus begins to glow with light, Moses and Elijah appear. Peter wants to stay. A voice from heaven declares, “This is my Son, the beloved, listen to him.”

The disciples fall down in fear, overcome. Then Jesus comes and touches them, saying, “Do not be afraid.” When they open their eyes, just Jesus is standing there.

When I was in my last year at seminary, I had a Luther seminar during spring semester. It was one long afternoon a week, with our favorite professor, Bob Goeser. He was a phenomenal preacher, very well read, a

Luther scholar, and a prof we loved to imitate. He used the Socratic method, asking us questions to lead us to insight and understanding. It turned out that everyone in the seminar was preaching the coming Sunday on this text. He set aside his lecture, and we did text study and sermon preparation the whole afternoon together. We crafted our sermons with an experienced mentor and one another.

He was also a very insightful professor, because he realized the teachable moment before us all and pivoted! When we left that day we were **grounded** in the scripture and **his gracious support and kindness**. We were **confident** in our message— **that the disciples were changed too.**

This was February. My mother had died the previous November. I was 25, She was 61. Christine Carlson Kintner, CCK. That was much too young to lose her. She was a kidney dialysis patient, and died of a heart attack. I was past the initial exhaustion of grief, but still quite tender. Thankfully I had good people nearby for support and care.

In an unexpected way, my loss of my mom, my grief for her, is tied to this text.

Roughly 10 years later, I got to visit the Holy Land, and one of the stops on the “All-the-Holy-Sights-in-7-Days-tour,” was the Mount of Transfiguration!

By Pacific Northwest standards, it is not very tall at all. There is a beautiful chapel at the top— lots of glass windows to see the view, and beautiful turquoise tile work. We rode to the top in Mercedes taxis, with no seatbelts. The drivers explained to us that we needed to yell Alleluia at every switchback. We were skeptical. On the first switchback, we weren't

very enthusiastic...so the driver slowed, and let the clutch out, and we started to slowly roll backwards....By the time we made it to the top we were doing our best at yelling Alleluia at the top of our voices!!

I still missed my mom, of course, but by now I knew how to live with my grief. It would still surprise me now and then, come out of left field and pierce my heart. My dad was still living and we were close.

She was eccentric in her own way— she never cooked a turkey, she didn't like cooking much. Sundays were always starvation Sundays at our house, we were on our own. Worked just fine for us. Her preparation was to set the cereal boxes out on the dining room table Saturday night. She read the New Yorker cover to cover every week. She taught Bethel Bible and 5th grade Sunday school forever. She insisted on labeling everything — including my umbrella- sewing a camp label with my name on it, onto the strap that closes the umbrella when I went to PLU. She was right, that standard black umbrella came back many times. She also changed the birthdays for my brother Bill and me. From November to October. Maternal Fiat. Because there were 6 birthdays between Thanksgiving and Christmas in our family and it was just too much. She also was the person at church that looked for new folks, and remembered their name the second time they came. She loved Glen Miller music. And bridge. And she loved us.

30 years after that Seminary text study, I was on retreat at the Shalom Center, in Mt Angel with the Benedictine Sisters. When I checked in, they said, we will be receiving a new icon at the morning mass tomorrow! Please come.

So I did. After the readings, the priest stood up and said, I understand we are receiving a new icon today, that will be Word enough, and sat down!!!

This new icon was huge. It took the icon institute several years to make it, which they understand as **prayer**. It took 6 people to carry it in. The reading desk was opposite the altar. So they snuffed the candles by the reading desk, and brought the icon in and over the desk, and propped it against the altar— It was the **Transfiguration!** It was beautiful!!.

In the spacious solitude of the retreat, I pondered that icon and that story again. I realized that my grief for my mom had now been changed, into gratitude and blessing. The hurt was much smaller and my gratitude much much larger.

How does this Bible reading **sustain** us disciples now?

At the beginning of Lent, as we contend with a divided nation, with all of the pandemic griefs, changes and new discoveries, and with all the excitement and hope of this interim time?

How are we Gracious and Grounded? How are we hospitable and kind? Confident? How are we changed? When do we pivot? How do we do this together? What is connected in unexpected ways? When do we shout Alleluia? What sustains us?

The same way God's people have always been sustained!!

With Prayer. With the Holy Spirit.

By listening to Jesus, the Beloved of God, so time with scripture.

By not being afraid, but dealing with the facts.

By doing this together, in community.

With wise mentors.

By remembering that this is Christ's church.

God's promises, of new life, hold: that we grafted into the body of Christ in our baptism, that we are fed and nurtured with the word, that Christ comes down from the cross to walk with us, and receive Grace and Forgiveness at the table in the holy meal. Right?!

We have a firm foundation.

We have learned again in the last pandemic years, how important community truly is. How we really are created for relationships and community, for showing up, and participating. For singing together. My hope is that we can see a tremendous adventure before us. God has been faithful and God will continue to be faithful.

I wonder if the disciples would have prayed the Holden prayer—
O God you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

They didn't know what was coming in Jerusalem, did they?

We don't exactly know how this interim time will unfold at St. Andrew, but we can count on God's promises.

So, dear ones, May you be sustained by the Beloved Son, may we all be gracious and grounded, may we shout Alleluia now and again on the switchbacks, may we be astonished by the art and beauty that tells the story again, and calls us to appreciate the losses that have become blessings over time, that indeed have changed us.

Come to the table, for grace and hope and to be Sustained in our
community and discipleship.

Amen