

FEBRUARY 11, 2024
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST
"THE RISING"



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***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

From the rising of the sun to its setting
God speaks to us and summons us.
God gathers us in covenant,
God's glory shines forth.
Let us worship God!

***UNISON INVOCATION:**

Mighty God, you call to us. You call to the heavens and to the earth in covenant. And so we call to you: be present as we worship. Gather us, that we may hear your voice and respond to your ways of righteousness. We pray in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

***INVITATION TO CONFESSION:** The whirlwind pace of our lives becomes so all-consuming that we may forget our origins. Our busyness separates us from knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ. Now in these quiet moments apart from our everyday distractions we seek to renew our relationship with God and be restored to wholeness.

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

God invites us to come to worship as our whole selves. God offers us a new beginning day by day and week by week. Trusting in God, we pray for transformation and new life:

All: Mighty God, you call to us and summon us to live in covenant and walk in righteousness, yet we forsake your covenant and walk in ways of injustice, ignorance, or disdain. Your beauty shines forth in creation, yet we abuse and tarnish what you have created. May we be willing to do the hard thing: may we see what is happening. May we see what we do. Renew us. Let us receive a double portion of your renewing spirit. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God's glory shines forth, and God judges with grace and with mercy. God gives us renewed life and our spirits rise.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 2 Kings 2:1-12

Elijah goes to heaven

2 Now the LORD was going to take Elijah up to heaven in a windstorm, and Elijah and Elisha were leaving Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³ The group of prophets from Bethel came out to Elisha. These prophets said to Elisha, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?"

Elisha said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!"

⁴ Elijah said, "Elisha, stay here, because the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went to Jericho.

⁵ The group of prophets from Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?"

He said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!"

⁶ Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So both of them went on together. ⁷ Fifty members from the group of prophets also went along, but they stood at a distance. Both Elijah and Elisha stood beside the Jordan River. ⁸ Elijah then took his coat, rolled it up, and hit the water. Then the water was divided in two! Both of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "What do you want me to do for you before I'm taken away from you?"

Elisha said, "Let me have twice your spirit."

¹⁰ Elijah said, "You've made a difficult request. If you can see me when I'm taken from you, then it will be yours. If you don't see me, it won't happen."

¹¹ They were walking along, talking, when suddenly a fiery chariot and fiery horses appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went to heaven in a windstorm.

¹² Elisha was watching, and he cried out, “Oh, my father, my father! Israel’s chariots and its riders!” When he could no longer see him, Elisha took hold of his clothes and ripped them in two.

EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are on the road to destruction. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who don’t have faith so they couldn’t see the light of the gospel that reveals Christ’s glory. Christ is the image of God.

⁵ We don’t preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 9:2-9 Jesus transformed**

² Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, ³ and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. ⁴ Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good that we’re

here. Let’s make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He said this because he didn’t know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human One had risen from the dead.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Seeing is believing, maybe”

When I was about 6 years old, my family took a trip out west to Colorado to see something we don’t have here in southern Illinois. They are called mountains. They seemed unbelievable to me. I was most excited when we drove to the top of Pikes Peak and we were actually in the clouds; or so my dad said. We couldn’t see anything below us or above us because of this white stuff all around us. I stuck my arm out of the car window to touch those white things my dad called clouds. “Dad, I don’t feel anything! I’m trying to touch the clouds but there’s nothing there. Are you sure these are clouds?”

They're not fluffy like pillows or marshmallows. I see them but I don't believe they are clouds."

Today's Bible story takes place on another different mountain. Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone.

Something happened to Jesus. He was transformed in front of them and his clothes shone brightly.

That was surprising enough but then the disciples saw Elijah and Moses standing next to Jesus and they were talking. Wait a minute! Elijah and Moses had been dead for centuries, or so the disciples thought. What does this mean? Was this a vision or a dream or were they really seeing these three men with their own eyes? Were they supposed to believe that Jesus was a prophet just like Elijah and Moses? Maybe they had not realized that Jesus was really of man sent by God.

The disciples soon received an answer to their queries. A cloud overshadowed this whole scene and then a voice came from the clouds. **"This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!"** And then the vision was gone. Jesus stood alone.

I'm sure the disciples were breathless and speechless. Wouldn't we be speechless, too? Jesus told the disciples not to say anything about this to anyone until "after the Human One had risen from the dead."

If we had seen this and tried to tell our friends about it, they would think we were nuts. They might lock us up and throw away the key.

The disciples were stunned about the last thing Jesus told them. They were to remain silent until he is risen from the dead. What does that mean?

I'm sure this was not the last time that Jesus shocked the disciples. The same could be said for us. Do we believe this story we read from the Bible this morning? Did I believe my dad when he said those were clouds?

What does God tell us to do when we have doubts? **"Listen to my Son!"** I think we can believe those words. Amen

PASTORAL PRAYER: God of all worlds, Christ the human image of God, Divine Spirit shared not only with prophets, but all believers in Jesus Christ. Like the young prophet Elisha, we desire a fuller empowerment of the Spirit in all your people. As we are drawn apart from the busy world, give us a more glorious vision of your holy love that we may go out into the world again with joyful sharing of the grace so freely given. Having seen the personal perfection of beauty, in Jesus Christ grant us Divine Spirit to let your radiance shine forth.

May our neighbors and colleagues at work our business associates and customers, our kinfolk and friends know from our attitudes toward them and life in general that we have been with you and you have spoken to us out of the silence. May we bring others to gather around the Lord's table to receive the sacrament of the new covenant with all earth's people made by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

As Jesus was a healer and miracle worker, so continue, through the church and all your apostles, ministries that transfigure outcasts with the dignity of the children of God, that transform the addicted to the freedom of minds and bodies made whole and change the hearts of the doubtful and unbelieving to joyful faith.

This morning we remember all our friends, family, and people in our community who suffer from poverty, despair, hunger, and lack of shelter. Help them find a way out of their situation through your helpers, social workers, and other agencies who know how to help.

We remember all those in pain or illness, those grieving, those who have mental illness, and all those on our prayer list. Bring your comfort and peace to them as they heal in your loving arms.

We pray all these things knowing the glory of your son Jesus has shone brightly on us all. . .

THE LORD'S 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

God's gifts to creation and to us are abundant and ever-

new. Entrusted with creation's care and with care for one another, we share our gifts out of our own abundance.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Mighty God, you live, and you do not leave us. With these gifts, we do not leave each other, but use them in mutual support. Bless those who receive and benefit from these gifts. May they know your presence with them. With these gifts, our prayers rise up to you. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: "In Dazzling Array" Lavon Bayler
Tune NCH 124 "Away in a Manger"**

**In dazzling array, Christ is lifted above
Life's everyday sojourn to dwell in God's love.
Disciples see visions of prophets, long known,
As Jesus, transfigured, is viewed as God's own.**

**Elijah and Moses share wisdom and light
With Jesus, soon hidden by clouds from friends' sight
Another voice summons their listening ears;
Give heed to my Chosen Ones; lay aside fears.**

**Transformed by their vision, yet told not to speak,
Christ's followers climbed down the mountain to seek
New Meaning and purpose in each day's events,
As doubts and resistance became more intense.**

**The mantle would fall on their shoulders one day,
To share with the world the intent of Christ's way.
The light they had seen would empower them to lead**

A movement of love that would grow and succeed.

**And so we are gathered in covenant grace,
Appointed as leaders now setting the pace
For churches to grow in response to God's care,
While sharing the Gospel's good news everywhere.**

***BENEDICTION:**

May you go renewed in spirit,
May you go, rising to new life,
May you go with God's mantle of mercy
And blessing of peace upon you,
Now and forever. Amen!

CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS for the friends and family
of Zach Biehl.

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Urban and Mary Lou Baum,
Ronald Bopp, Jackie Canterbury, Carson Edwards, Josh
Mueller, Marilyn Paul, Syd Safriet, David Seneczyn, Amy
Smith, Yvonne Weber, Joan Williams, Rosemary Williams.

REMINDER: Wednesday February 14 is Ash Wednesday.
Services will be at noon and 7 pm.