

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Open your ears to the good news of the gospel.  
All: **Open your eyes to the glory of God.**  
One: We have come to share knowledge of Jesus Christ.  
All: **We gather, seeking transformation and empowerment.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Celebrate Love” SF#2073

*Refrain:*

**Celebrate love, love, love.  
Celebrate love, love, love.  
Celebrate love  
so amazing.  
He’s creating  
his wonderful love in you.**

**1. We can celebrate his love today.  
Jesus loves everyone.  
We can celebrate new life today.  
Jesus loves everyone.**

*Refrain*

**2. We can sing about his love for us.  
Jesus loves everyone.  
He is living here inside of us.  
Jesus loves everyone.**

*Refrain*

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**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We may celebrate your glorious light, O Lord, but too often we turn away. You reveal yourself to us, but we are looking in all the wrong places. You speak to us, but we are listening to all the wrong voices. Help us, O Lord. Forgive us and help us. Turn our faces to you and shine upon us your glory. Tune our hearts to you and speak of your love and your way. Remake us in the image of your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from II Corinthians 5)*

One: "The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died."

All: **"And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them."**

One: Because Christ died, we receive forgiveness for our sins.

All: **Because he was raised from the dead, we receive new life in him.**

One: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

All: **This is the good news of the gospel: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Let us rejoice in our new creation in Christ!**

**\*THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

**THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE READING** Mark 9:2-9

MARK 9:2-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> *As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Humankind had risen from the dead.*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON** “Transf(orm)igured by a Valentine?” by Pastor Bill Vincent

‘Happy Valentine’s Day!’

Hmmm.

‘Happy Transfiguration Sunday!’

Doesn’t have the same ring to it. Nor does it have the same focus. Well, it does, and yet it doesn’t.

We must be clear: the Transfiguration is not about us – though it does call forth a response from us.

But the Transfiguration is not about us: it’s about Christ. He is the one who shines in all his glory, “*glory as of the only Son of the Father*” (John 1). He is the one revealed in all his glory, even if only “for one brief shining moment.” He is the one of whom the voice from the cloud says, “*Listen to him.*”

This is the one! When we yearn to have some guidance in life, when we long to know what the mystery of life is all about, this is the one! He’s the one who can tell us! He’s the one who can guide us! He’s the one who can help us! Listen to HIM!

So we listen. And we follow. And we live and learn and grow in his presence.

-And we begin to understand that

--the one who is transfigured – revealed in all the glory of God –

\*is the one who loves us, even in the pain, even unto death.

In the immediately following passage, Jesus and the three go down into the valley where a man begs to have his son healed, and Jesus’ disciples are helpless to do so. From the mountain of transfiguration and glory, Jesus goes down into the valley of pain and woundedness and helplessness – and loves the man in his agony, and loves the son in his woundedness, and loves the disciples in their helplessness. Because, you see, that’s where he is – in our valleys of human life. That’s what he does – loves us ... even unto death, even his own death.

And it may be that his glory is revealed even more clearly in his coming dark death than in his bright transfiguration.

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.* (John 15:13-NRSV)

he would come to say.

The Lord really does love us...and understand us...and care for us.

So listen to him!

So we listen. And we follow. And we live and learn and grow in his presence.

-And we begin to see that

--the one who is transfigured – revealed in all the glory of God –

---who loves us, even unto death,

\*is the one who transfigures us, who transforms us by loving us.

Let me read you this story, from a peacemaking resource of the Presbyterian Church, about a man and his son:

**I remember a day a couple of years ago when I was dealing with a great deal of shame – a great lack of peace – in my life. Those who sought to help me were saying that I needed to affirm and reaffirm God's love for me no matter what, and do that each and every day. On this particular day, I was sitting in our empty garage, tossing the ball back and forth with our preschool-aged son, and generally feeling terrible about me and in a grumpy mood with him. Then I paused and said to myself, "Remember, God loves you, no matter what." And suddenly, I saw my son through entirely different eyes. It was as if I had put on a whole new pair of glasses of a completely different shade. Affirming God's love for me, I was able to view my son in love, and in peace. It made all the difference in the world. I could love him as I knew myself to be loved. I could be at peace with me, and with him. (from "Peacemaking Through Worship, Volume III," Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))**

The transformative effect of love: of receiving love, of being loved.

It changes us, renews us, remakes us into the very image of the one who loves us.

So listen to him!

So we listen. And we follow. And we live and learn and grow in his presence.

-And we begin to know that

--the one who is transfigured – revealed in all the glory of God –

---who loves us, even unto death,

----who transforms us by loving us,

\*is the one who invites us to embrace this transformation fully, not only in receiving his love, but also in sharing it.

The transformative effect of love: of loving, of being the one who loves.

Early on in my ministry, I served as co-director for a week-long summer camp for Junior and Senior High youth. It was a long week, a hard week. After the week was over, my co-director and I gathered together with the counselors to review and evaluate the week and our experience. One of the counselors, who had done his fair share of the hard work, said about the week, "I took away with me more than I gave and didn't feel guilty."

That's the way it is with love.

As Michael W. Smith sings,

**Love isn't love**

**Til you give it away**

A grandmother knew that truth. When asked by someone, "How do you divide your love amongst all these grandchildren?" she answered, "You don't divide, you multiply."

That's the way it is with love. It feeds upon itself: the more you know it, the more you share it; the more you share it, the more you know it. And it changes you.

In the movie "The Family Man" (2000), Jack Campbell is a powerful business man, yet empty and lonely. Through a strange set of circumstances (available only in the movies) he gets to 'go back' and see what his life might have been like had he made different choices. When he returns to 'normal', he races to the airport to try to convince the woman he loves to make a different choice. At the boarding gate he pleads with her not to get on the plane. And he says, **"You see, you're a better person than I am. And it made me a better person to be around you."**

And one might wonder:

-Is he a better person because she loves him?

-Is he a better person because he has learned to love her?

-Or are both true?

I am a better person when I know – when I remember, when I claim – that I am loved.

I am a better person when I love another: when I take that risk and reach out beyond myself and offer the care and grace, the understanding and mercy that I know and have received and experienced myself. When I push myself and share that love, offer that love, live that love, do that love, then I am the better for it.

And in being better, I am changed, renewed, re-formed, transformed more and more into the creation – the new creation; the new, renewed person – God calls me, wants me, intends me to be.

And I know more fully and more confidently the love the Lord has for me. And I am more willing, and able, to share that love with others.

And so the cycle continues, and builds, and builds upon itself, all by the power of the transfigured one who loves us and the world.

And this is how we will begin our journey of Lent: with this glimpse of the glory; this glimpse of the brightness of what life can be like under the transformative power of love.

And we will need that glimpse of glory – we will need to hold on to it and focus on it and remind ourselves of it.

For as we continue on this Lenten journey of life and continue in this transformative work, we will come to find out that it is not without its obstacles, its difficulties, its pain.

It is transformation to life, new life – Yes.

But there is much that happens between the start of our journey and its ultimate end. There is much that happens between when the caterpillar weaves the cocoon and something wondrous emerges.

*"Do not be conformed to this world,"* the Apostle Paul writes, *but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:1-2-NRSV)

We are transformed – re-created – by the one who is transfigured in all the glory of God.  
We are transformed – re-born – by him not only in receiving his love.  
We are also transformed – re-made – by him in sharing his love: transformed in the very  
act of loving others the same way we know ourselves to be loved.  
That is a Valentine flower that will not wilt.  
That is a Valentine candy that will not spoil.  
That is a Valentine card that will not turn to dust.

So listen, and hear again:  
You are loved. Know that, claim that; and be renewed.  
You are loved. Show that, share that; and be remade.

### **\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**We trust in God,  
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
In sovereign love God created the world good  
and makes everyone equally in God's image,  
male and female, of every race and people,  
to live as one community.  
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
Ignoring God's commandments,  
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
accept lies as truth,  
exploit neighbor and nature,  
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
We deserve God's condemnation.  
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
In everlasting love,  
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.  
Hearing their cry,  
God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.  
Loving us still,  
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.**

**Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
God is faithful still.**

**With believers in every time and place,  
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

*(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)*

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Pastor: Lord, by your Spirit,  
**People: touch us,**  
Pastor: in your love,  
**People: grant us your peace.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER** *(Traditional)*

**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;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.**

### **OFFERING**

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**O God, you come to us in love, fresh as the morning. We are sustained by your mercy and renewed through your grace. You have sent us your Spirit to freshen our day. All that we are we owe to you. Transform what we bring you to harmonize with your wishes, and convert all our actions according to your will. Amen.**

## SENDING

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me” GtG 703

1. **Jesus, thy boundless love to me  
no thought can reach, no tongue declare;  
O knit my thankful heart to thee,  
and reign without a rival there!  
Thine wholly, thine alone, I'd live;  
myself to thee entirely give.**
  
2. **O grant that nothing in my soul  
may dwell, but thy pure love alone;  
O may thy love possess me whole,  
my joy, my treasure, and my crown!  
All coldness from my heart remove;  
may every act, word, thought be love.**
  
3. **O Love, how gracious is thy way!  
All fear before thy presence flies;  
care, anguish, sorrow melt away  
where'er thy healing beams arise.  
O Jesus, nothing may I see,  
nothing desire, or seek, but thee.**

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### **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

**Pastor:** ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
**People:** ...Amen.

### **POSTLUDE**

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