

During the past year I have found myself blown away by the simple things in life. Things I think I used to take for granted. The other evening it was late, and I decided to look outside. The sky was so bright with the moon and stars. It was breathtaking. In that moment, I was so thankful to witness just one of the millions of ways that God’s light in the world continues to give us hope.

In the Old Testament, we see that the Elisha experienced something amazing in the sky. Something which has never happened again. Elisha was walking along with his mentor, knowing that God would take him to heaven. But Elisha probably never could have imagined how that would happen.

With a chariot of fire and horses and a whirlwind Elijah was escorted to heaven. The sight must have been breathtaking. Instead of being in awe, we find that Elisha is in mourning. Now how is he supposed to move forward?

In this season of our lives, our grief has also blinded us to the glory of the Lord. In our prolonged season of waiting, we may be experiencing compassion fatigue. There is so much hurt happening in the world, that we can no longer bear to feel the ramifications of COVID each day.

And yet, the glory of the Lord is still shining in the world today.

In our Gospel lesson for today we see that Jesus was transfigured, which means that he was shining bright white as he spent time on the mountain in the presence of God. This was also further affirmation that he was the Son of God, the one chosen by God to continue God’s covenant relationship with God’s people.

In this moment of transfiguration two important people from the past were present: Moses and Elijah. They all had something in common, they had all witnessed the glory of the Lord.

Moses experienced God in a burning bush and would come down from the mountain of the Lord glowing after being in the presence of God. In fact, he was glowing so brightly that he started wearing a veil so that the Israelites would not be afraid of him.

We, too, have veiled the greatness of God in our lives to make others feel comfortable, in order to get all the tasks done in our lives that need to be completed. But, God’s glory still burns deep within our hearts.

Elijah experienced the glory of the Lord when he was escorted to heaven. Through fire and wind Elijah crossed over from life to death and life beyond death. The church experienced the glory of God in the moment of Pentecost where wind and fire revealed the Holy Spirit.

In the moment of the transfiguration, we see that Jesus, Elijah, and Moses are chatting. Why is this so significant?

Commentary shares that Elijah and Moses represent the resurrection life: “Jewish tradition held that Moses...and Elijah...did not die but were living in heaven.”¹ In this moment the old Covenant made by God to the people of Israel is being realized in Jesus Christ and all who believed in him.

God had already spoken at Jesus’ baptism. Here God speaks again and tells the disciples to “listen to him” (Mark 9:7). We also need to be snapped back to reality sometimes. Jesus is still speaking to us today through the Bible and the Holy Spirit, but are we listening?

Are we aware that the glory of the Lord continues to shine today and how do we bask in the glory of the Lord?

In this season, I think we recognize the glory of the Lord by being aware of God who continues to work to combat darkness and evil in the world. Christ has already defeated death, and every day God is conquering evil and making a way for us to always find light even in the darkest of times.

We, like Peter, want to stay on the mountaintop with Jesus where everything feels right, and everything makes sense. We want moments like this to never end. Like the people of God created the tabernacle for God to dwell which inhabited the ark of the covenant, Peter wanted to create a place for Jesus, Elijah and Moses to reside in forever.

We also desire to capture the glory of the Lord and keep it with us. I have seen the glory of the Lord be revealed through our charge during the pandemic. Every time someone wrote a card to those who lost a loved one, every moment someone picked up the phone to check on someone, every time you continue to write a check to support your church that you can’t even attend right now the glory of the Lord is revealed and the ministry of Christ continues.

When has the glory of God been revealed to you during this pandemic? Has it happened in large or more subtle ways?

Unlike the disciples who were sworn to secrecy, we are called to share these experiences with others. Whether we take a moment to point out to our family or friends the vastness of God creations, or whether to take a moment to name that God is working in our own lives or the lives of another, every day we have an opportunity to see Christ’s light working in the world.

The question before us today, is how can we shine with the glory of the Lord? This is our story as United Methodists. John Wesley desired this feeling of assurance. He was a devoted disciple, but he felt that he had lost his shine.

This may be how you are feeling today a little dull and not so shiny. I think this is what the pandemic has done to all of us. Yet, Christ continues to call us to shine as the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:15: “...be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.”

How can we shine when we can't go anywhere or see anyone? Shining starts from within. It is something that exudes from within us. As we approach the season of Lent, we can work on ourselves, to work on our hearts for God. How are you nurturing your soul during this difficult season?

John Wesley was led by the Holy Spirit, during a difficult time in his life to a worship service. He went without expectation, but God met him there, gave him assurance and encouraged him to move forward helping others receive the light of Christ.

So even on days when you may not be feeling shiny for Christ, know that you still may be exuding your faith.

Like Moses, we are called to desire for others to see that we are shining with the light of God. Like Elijah, we are called to live without fear knowing that our resurrection lives await us.

So, like the disciples, we now enter a period of waiting. This waiting is not an idle time. It is a time for refinement and awakening. This is our opportunity to grow spiritually both individually and together.

Remember that you are not alone on their journey. We all need to be reminded that we have been called to shine like stars for Christ to point to the greatest light there is.

Light was the first thing that God created after the Spirit swept over the water. Again, we see light and wind as integral to God creating new life.

This week I challenge you to remember the light of Christ. Light a candle and turn out the light. Give thanks to God for your very life and ask God to continue to help you to embody the good news of Christ. This is our corporate prayer.

Find moments in your day where you feel like you can stay on the mountain with Christ, and when you must come down, do not dismay. Christ is still with you.

Help create these mountaintop moments for other people. Whether this means carving out some more time talking to family or friends, or getting outside with the people you love, spend time thinking about how to help others see the glory of the Lord.

One of my favorite things to do is to send people on an Emmaus weekend. This is a set aside time of retreat where people can have a mountaintop experience. It is always so exciting for me to see these people after the weekend and see how their faces are glowing with Christ’s love. On our charge we experience this when Doug Bywaters and Jeff Thompson come back after a Kairos prison ministry weekend.

Something amazing happens to us when we invite others to see the glory of the Lord. This is how we embody the good news of Jesus Christ.

How will you respond in faith this week?

Will you light a candle? Call a friend? Seek to see the glory of the Lord in the service of others?

Our quest for experiencing the glory of the Lord begins with Scripture. Through the light of a fire God led the Israelites through the darkness in the wilderness. Through the light of Christ, God invited us to understand God’s love and grace. Through the brightness of the Holy Spirit, we too are invited to tell others that Jesus Christ in our Lord and Savior.

The good news for our lives today is that God continues to call us to reveal the glory of the Lord with all we encounter. May we all shine from within that others may know of God’s love and grace through us. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Endnotes

¹ Leander Keck et al. The New Interpreter’s Biblical Commentary. Vol. VII. Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN. 2015. P. 477.