**光輝く雲に覆われて**

**マタイ 17:1-9**

**2/26/17**

**ブラッド スティンストラ牧師**

**皆さんはどうだかわかりませんが、私はペトロ、ヤコブ、ヨハネが山の頂上で体験したことと匹敵するような体験をしたことがない。　彼らはいつものようにイエスと話しながら歩いていた。すると突然にして光輝く雲に覆われて畏れおののき、ひざまずかざるをえなくなる。聖なる神秘が顕れたとも表現できる。イエスの姿は劇的に変わる。神の声が聞こえ、主の感触に対応して目を開けると、風変わりな訪問者たちが顕れそして消えていき、彼らとイエスだけが残される。　それは、最初にやってきたような状況に後戻りしたようでもある。**

**その日に起こった独特な状況は、そこにいた３人が困惑したのと同じように、私たちをも困惑させる。　その光景は私たちはどのように表現したらよいかわからないので、言葉が伝えるままに任せておけば良い。なにかの手助けが得られると期待するなか、私はこの状況を表現する芸術について調べたが、ただ偉大な芸術家たちも、この光景を表現するのに成功できていないということがわかっただけだった。**

**The uniqueness of what took place that day leaves us just as perplexed as the three men who were there. We aren’t even sure how to visualize the scene, let alone describe it. In the hope of getting some help with that, I researched the history of art on this subject only to discover that great artists have stretched their imaginations as far as they can without much success. Their efforts, no matter how noble, all still flatten out the wonder of the radical alterations that took place in the landscape at the top of the mountain, so they fall short of providing us with a complete picture of this transformational event. Some of them tried their best to depict the pure splendor of his supernatural power – a Jesus who shines with a blinding brightness similar to that of a bolt of lightning or a camera flash that is too close to your eye, a display of pyrotechnic majesty so stunningly beautiful that we can almost lose sight of him. (Show the first 3 slides.)**

**At the other end of the visual spectrum are portrayals of a Jesus with a much reduced radiance. He is clad in glowing white clothes to be sure, but at least one part of his body is noticeably not nearly so glorious. Perhaps because they are still anchored firmly to the ground, his feet seem to remain unchanged. (Show the other 3 slides.) While we certainly wouldn’t want to call these rather unremarkable extremities of Jesus ugly, they are by no means divinely perfect. They are ordinary feet, real human feet – skinny, bony, probably very dusty and calloused after traversing hundreds of miles of bad roads and treacherous paths – no different from the feet of the others who had been invited to make the trip up the mountain with him. In these paintings, there is no transfiguration for the feet. The holiness of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus are clearly juxtaposed for our view, the glory mixed right in with the earthy.**

**I have to admit that my heart is instinctively drawn more to the second group of images of the events that occurred at the top of the mountain, because they somehow convey to me the hope of the potential transfiguration of the basest of our own settings. I want to believe that, against all odds, wherever I happen to turn my eyes in this world can still somehow be seen as capable of being touched with heavenly wonder – even if any blessed glimpse of God’s new reality subsequently disappears from my view as fast as it was able to be recognized. Like many of you, I hunger for those occasional brief moments of enlightenment when, to my great surprise, an otherwise unexceptional time and place is suddenly surrounded by divine glory and transforming grace overwhelms me right where I am standing. Even if we will never share exactly what Peter, James and John were privileged to experience when they saw Jesus’ shining face, we, too, can be caught up in a bright cloud of heavenly splendor every once in a while so that God can strengthen our frequently feeble faith.**

**I am, in fact, very much looking forward to that kind of experience in the coming weeks when the people of Resurrection have the chance to welcome Amy Taylor to the Lord’s Table as a full participant for the first time. That might not seem like a big thing to you, and you can undoubtedly be forgiven for wondering why I would find that so exciting. After all, Amy grew up here, and this congregation has for a long time celebrated Holy Communion every Sunday. Seeing her in church is something you have come to expect and being a part of the procession to the altar for a bit of bread and wine is a central part of your weekly worship routine, but I have yet to be told by anyone that either of these things can be given credit for having produced a noticeable transformation in the life of a single individual up to this point. Moreover, all of us have gotten so bogged down in the general negativity that plagues our society these days that we aren’t very optimistic that anything wondrous is likely to be on the horizon for us anytime in the near future. Too many people go through the motions of living with all the enthusiasm of a middle-schooler getting out of bed to take a math test, and we seem to have formed the awful habit of not looking up toward heaven often enough. We keep our heads down, staring perpetually at our feet – those plain, old, unremarkable, human feet that are firmly anchored to the ground of a planet that increasingly feels to us like it is doomed. How, we think, is one young person’s forthcoming participation in the ancient ritual of the Eucharist supposed to be regarded as a mountain-top, life-changing, glorious event – even for her?**

**Well, here’s the thing. I am not going to bother trying to make the argument that the rest of the world needs to take note of what is going to happen in our midst, but I do hope to convince you that the community of the faithful will never fail to see God’s miraculous power on display if we will only watch for it. While what I want you to prepare for along with her is unfortunately not exactly the awe-inspiring sight of Jesus being transfigured before your eyes, I’m confident nevertheless you can count on an equally profound transformation taking place here one Sunday very soon. This is something you won’t want to miss. For even if, in that wondrous moment when Amy receives Christ’s body and blood instead of the words of blessing she always had to settle for before, her outward expression does not alter, both her life and ours are going to be forever changed. Her heart is going to be filled with the splendor of God’s forgiveness and healing, and, as we watch her, we will have the chance to observe this world taking on a new shine. God’s light will push back the darkness just a little bit more, and you will catch a glimpse of the goodness and beauty that is coming in the kingdom that is established by his Son. Amen.**