**“Experiencing God’s Glory”**

Text Luke 9:28-36. Preached by Reverend Eleanor Scarlett at the Bolton United Church March 3:19.

Today we celebrate Transfiguration which is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany, and the Sunday closest to Ash Wednesday which is the beginning of Lent. Transfiguration is a process of change.

A. M. Ramsay a well-known theologian speaks of transfiguration “as *a mirror in which the Christian mystery is seen in its unity. We perceive that the living and the dead are one in Christ, that the old covenant and the new are inseparable, that the cross and the glory are one, that human nature has a destiny for glory, that in Christ the final word is uttered and in ‘Him’ alone the Father is well pleased.”*

Today’s readings picture the transfiguration story of Jesus, Jesus’ face shone like lighting, and his clothes became dazzling white. It is here we see God’s power being revealed in Jesus. Modern day readers find the story of the transfiguration a bit difficult to believe. Whether we believe or not, it is deeply rooted in our faith.

Sometimes in life we lose sight of one of God’s primary reasons for pulling us into divine presence. God’s desire for us, is to experience love through unmerited grace; no longer the way we were, but rather as changed people. Our faces may not glow as Jesus did but those around us can tell we’ve spent time in God’s presence.

Transformation is a time when we are reminded that changes are taking place not only in the life of the church, and our world but also in our personal lives.

Luke states that Jesus went up the mountain with Peter, John and James to pray and while he was praying the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became as bright as light. We might wonder why Jesus chose these three disciples-Peter-James and John. Peter’s importance is self-evident. John is traditionally considered to be ‘the one whom Jesus loved” making him another obvious choice. But what about James, John’s brother why?

Jesus is (glorified) in front of his disciples, Glory can be defined as a mark of splendor that accompanies one who has it. So, it is, that light and brightness are associated with glory. While human beings can possess a certain amount of glory, God through Jesus Christ is majestic in every way. The transfiguration is a preview of God’s glory.

What about this mountain top experience? What sets it apart from others? Jesus was seen in the presence of two great prophets of old. The disciples were terrified as they remembered the teachings of the prophet Malachi that God would send Elijah before the day of the Lord’s arrival.

In addition, there was Moses, the prophet who first experienced being transfigured. Luke tells us nothing of the content of the conversation between Jesus and the prophets, he tells us that they speak of Jesus’ departure which was about to happen in Jerusalem, a reference to his death, resurrection and ascension.

In verse 33, Peter said to Jesus, “*Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”*  I want you to think for a moment of this experience. Here we see Peter, James and John not fully understanding what is taking place, and Peter being Peter wanted to do something, but why three shelters? Was Peter trying to prolong the mountaintop experience by avoiding the time when they would go down the mountain and re-enter the world, especially knowing well what was ahead for Jesus.

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, *“This is my Son, the Beloved: listen to him!” God’s words, “listen to him.”* When the voice had spoken, they found that they were alone with Jesus. I sometimes wonder about us and our world, are we too far removed from creation, can we no longer experience the wonders of nature and its connection to God and us?

I would like for you to imagine that you are present on the mountain top with Peter, James and John: stay there awhile; envision yourselves as you experience the transfiguration of Jesus taking place. Jesus is transformed; he is in the company of great prophets of old.

You hear a thunderous voice coming from the highest point of the mountain; Coming face-to face with God, you are blinded by the light, the voice speaks, just as you were about to believe it’s over. What feelings emerge for you? Jesus stands alone, the source of our hope and confidence, he touches us and offers words of comfort and reassurance. He replaces our fears with love and acceptance.

Martin Luther King’s last sermon was delivered on April 3, 1968, the eve of his assassination, here he said *“I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountain top.*

*And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go to the mountain top. I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promised Land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”*

Could it be that Martin Luther King’s experiences had given him and us a glimpse of God’s glory? What are you feeling? What do you plan to do with these feelings? How about using this experience to share the wonder of God’s mystery with those we meet? As I re-watched that video clip of Martin Luther’s last speech, I could see the tears flowing down his face and like him I too was crying. Could it be, that he knew that he would be entering God’s glory that night? How about us, can we experience God’s glory in our everyday lives!