

The child was afraid of the dark. His mother took him into his room, turned on the lights to demonstrate that there was nothing in his room that would bother him. She said "Good night" and went back to her room across the hall. The boy called again. This time his mother said, "Just think in your mind and know I am right there with you." The four old replied, "I want to see some skin, I want to see your face.

We know that story when it comes to seeing God, don't we? "Just make it plain God, so I will know it is you."

I have a friend that says Christianity does not relate to day-to-day living.

People who say this probably are thinking about stories like our Transfiguration story in the Matthew text today. I mean, we know right off when the story begins about going up a mountain that something is up. Things happen on mountains – Moses went up a mountain for the Ten Commandments. The great collection of the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke are referred to as "The sermon on the Mount." Peter, James and John are present to this scene of Jesus floating in the sky, his robe is glowing, he is causally speaking with two dead prophets, Moses and Elijah – who are also floating in the air. These three disciples appear in the text to be as skeptical as we are. They don't know what to say or do with this scene. It is Peter who suggests that maybe they should build three "tents" –ske nai – which also means "tabernacles" maybe we would refer to them as "huts." Peter just wanted to mark the place of God's presence with them in this special way. The custom was to build houses of worship of top of places where God was present and certain places mattered more than others. Peter wanted to mark the spot. They fall down on the ground. They are afraid. My friend would say, "What in the world does that have to do with day-to-day living?"

When I read this story, I can see the skepticism. The transfiguration is one of those unexplainable moments that we are almost afraid to touch. But today, I want us to look at this story with our imagination – not in the sense that the story is imaginary, but in the sense that this story reminds us that God is greater than what we usually imagine. Not only is God greater than we imagine, I think we too are greater than we imagine.

Peter James and John are just like us. They have a hard time seeing what is right in front of them. They are three of Jesus' closest followers. They are three of the first four Jesus called. In Matthew's record of the call of Jesus to them, they do not hesitate. They dropped their fishing nets and followed Jesus. Here they are up on this mountain. They are not prepared for what they see. Jesus' face shown like the sun and his clothes turned dazzling white. Moses and Elijah show up. They remembered that Moses' face has shown when he ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. Everyone expected Elijah to come back. Even this cloud surrounding the three was a sign of God's presence. Peter, James and John were terrified. How much more evidence would a person to know that God was working through Jesus? You smile, "Sure!"

God's presence is anything but obvious for most of us. We look at the brutality of war or in the political corruption everywhere and we wonder, where is God? We wonder where is God when hurricanes and tsunamis wipe out hundreds of lives. Where is God with all the competing religions, each claiming to hold the truth? My friend would ask, where is God in the everyday dreariness of life?

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Maybe we need this vision in Matthew today. This voice speaks saying, "This is my beloved son, in him I am well pleased." And then there are the words "Listen to him!" Kinda like the words of a parent – "are you listening to me? Did you hear what I said?" I am reminded of the words of the Shema. "Hear, O Israel, The Lord is God. The Lord is one. You will love the Lord your God with all your ears, soul and strength." The word "hear" has the same connotation of a parent. It is not just "Hearing." The intent is to obey.

This transfiguration story speaks to us today – to Pilgrim. I believe that all of us in this congregation pray that Pilgrim can become a kind of transfiguration. We hope that in our worship we can reveal God more clearly to a world that is searching for God. We hope that in our service out in the world that we can reveal God more clearly to a world that is searching for God. There are lots of people in our world who are just like my friend. They have given up hope of finding God. Maybe Pilgrim church can reveal God to them. For those who cannot see God through the fog of their pain, may Pilgrim church reveal God to them. For those who have known only a distorted view of God as too judgmental, too punitive, too exclusive, maybe Pilgrim church reveal God to them.

To me, if God can transfigure Jesus, God can transfigure us. Change is a way that God is shaping us, stretching us – of transfiguring us and reminding us that we too are indeed beloved.

When the disciples heard God's voice, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Get up and do not be afraid."

Get up, Pilgrim, and do not be afraid. For you are dazzling. You are beloved. You too are always being made new. In God's presence, we are always more than we can imagine. Get up, do not be afraid!