

Transfiguration

February 11th, 2024

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

The International Space Station sits in the earth's orbit in space. It can sometimes be seen by the naked eye here on earth. The space station is a micro gravity space environment and research laboratory shared by many, many countries around the world for experiments in biology, human biology, physics, astronomy, meteorology -all kinds of stuff. It's a place where rocket scientists hang around with each other. And it's space so they're literally, "Hanging around".

I heard a scientist on the radio talking about life in the space station and she said something that caught my attention. She talked about the view of the earth from a distance. How beautiful the earth is. How round, and blue, and misty. How majestic the mountains are. How it glows as a beacon of life and hope in the darkness of the universe. *There is nothing else like it.*

She said it's well known, that dinner conversation at the International Space Station always returns to the same topic- the wonder and the awe that the scientists feel when they look upon the earth from a new perspective. It is well known, that no matter who is there, and no matter what their mission, sooner or later, everybody says the same thing-

If only... If only, the leaders of earth could see the world as we see the world. If only, the leaders of the world, and of all the countries could see what *we* see- That the world is one small planet. That we are all one. That our earth is fragile, and beautiful, That from space, there are no divisions between us. Scientists are so inspired and so in awe of the earth from this new and higher perspective, that they are sure, that this new vision could heal and teach, mend our fighting and our greed, give us hope and new priorities as one people, the people of one planet.

Once you've seen the earth from space, you can never think of it the same way again. You are changed forever. *It is an epiphany.*

Today is the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany in the church, and our gospel story tells of the disciples having an epiphany of their own. Jesus chooses Peter, James and John and they go with him up a mountain. And upon the mountain, Jesus is transfigured. His clothes become dazzling and sparkling and beside Jesus appear two other people, Elijah and Moses. And Peter, who knows that this is a Holy moment, says how good it is to be there with Jesus and Elijah and Moses, and wants to stay. But a great cloud overshadows them and the voice of God comes down and says- *"This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"* And then, Elijah and Moses disappear and the disciples have no choice but to follow Jesus down the mountain.

In this vision Jesus is together with Elijah, and with Moses. Elijah is the most powerful prophet of Israel, and Moses is the great liberator and law-giver. Together they represent everything the children of Israel believe in- Their scriptures, and their relationship to God. *The law and the prophets.* Seeing Jesus together with them in the glorious light of God is a revelation- an epiphany- that in Christ, and in following Christ- we are fulfilling all that the law and the prophets call us to.

This epiphany tells the disciples of Jesus' divinity, it tells them of Christ's rightful place in the heavenly kingdom, it gives them a taste of God's power and glory, like the moment the astronauts look down on the earth from a new place, and suddenly understand it in a different way.

In the transfiguration, the disciples upon the mountain, understand their leader and teacher in a new way. They understand their own relationship with him in a new way, they understand his relationship to all the people of God in a new way. *And it is incredible and they want to stay in that light and that glory with God and the prophets and with Jesus.*

And for the astronauts at the International Space Station who sit around and feel that all the problems of fighting on earth could just melt away if only the leaders could see the earth as they see it- *it is good to be there.*

The Epiphany of a peaceful and unified earth is a sign- a guiding light-for those who are privileged enough to visit the International Space Station. But that privilege carries with it the responsibility to return to the earth- to wade into the divisions between nations, to talk, to listen, to collaborate, to disagree, and to work for the unity of all people.

The Transfiguration, the vision that the chosen three disciples received upon the mountain - the privilege of seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah in Glory- carried with it the responsibility to climb back down the mountain. To face ridicule and danger, to teach and to work, to forgive and to heal, to suffer with those who were suffering and to bring a word of hope to the brokenhearted.

The epiphany of the transfiguration - would not protect them from the world, or allow them to skip out on all that life on earth entails- but would call them *deeper* into it, and strengthen them for service among the people God loves.

Here in our church, on this last Sunday of the season of Epiphany, we will enact and experience an epiphany of our own. Today, we will share together in the sacrament of communion. When we participate in communion, we remember that Jesus is here with us, when we do as he taught us, and break bread together. In Communion, we see the faces of one another, elders and children, all of us from different places and diverse families, representing God's hope and vision for a healed creation, A table where all are fed, Where all are welcome, Where all are loved.

In Communion, we are with God, we are with one another. We are united with Christians around the world, from other places, and even from other times. It is a little epiphany for us, to imagine unity and peace among all God's children. *And it will be very good.*

But like the astronauts who must come back from outer space – down to tackle the problems of earth, And like the disciples who must come down the mountain to continue the hard work of teaching and loving God's people, we who will share in this service today will return to our lives. My prayer is that we will experience the presence of God in this community today- perhaps in the music, perhaps in communion, perhaps in time with a friend. And that experience will capture our imagination and heart- be a guiding vision of God's power. And give us strength and hope as we go down the mountain back to the work of loving all the children of God.

Amen.

Rev. Emily Carr