

All Saints Episcopal Church

Steenrijk

Leidenstraat at Heelsumstratt

Willemstad, Curacao

The Episcopal Diocese of Venezuela

The Last Sunday after Epiphany (C)

Epiphany 6 (C)

February 27, 2022

DRAFT

“Having Mountaintop Experiences”

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to Luke 9:28-36

About eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and

went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”--not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came

and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Bring us to your mountaintop, Lord Christ, so we can see as you see. Amen.

Prayers for peace in Europe that Russia and the Ukraine can coexist without War - Amen and Amen. Hear our prayers Dear Lord.

[In memory of Helmin Magno Wiels –
December 9, 1958 - May 5, 2013; Presiding-
Bishop Katharine Jefferts-Schori preached here
a week later at Steenrijk on May 12, 2013]

A young boy was corresponding with Mr. Rogers of television fame, Fred Rogers, whose weekly United States television program was a comforting chat of Mr. Rogers with children watching him on television. The boy writing Mr. Rogers told of a life of abuse and neglect. This young boy had been left by both parents and put in a foster home. But in the foster home he had discovered the love he had always hoped for. He wrote Fred Rogers that now he

understood that he no longer had to yearn for an unreachable future, but he had learned to live in the present. He said, “If we take care of the present we can take care of the forever at the same time.” And that is very good advice for all of us. If we take care of our present we will be taking care of our forever at the same time.

Our problem is that we share the shortsightedness of the apostle Peter in our Gospel lesson for today, Peter, whose response to the heavenly presence of Moses and Elijah visiting with the transfigured Jesus--Peter’s only thought was to freeze this sight in a box, or actually in three boxes or booths. Peter wanted to place a wall around each great person and be

able to go back and recall this impressive event whenever he chose to. Our own lives are marked by encounters with the divine, and our tendency too is to want to freeze them in time and space, but of course that will never be possible. We have to go on in our earthly journey, strengthened by our divine encounter, but not paralyzed into inactivity by it. We are still on the temporal side of reality. We cannot seek to live on a purely spiritual plane, above the fray and frustrations of the world. We are called to engage the world, to help spread the gospel of the hope of Jesus Christ to the world, to deliver his love to the unloved, the least, the lost. And by doing so our lives will take on new

and greater meaning. We need to ask what we can do to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the dark and unbelieving world.

A young child who had become a Christian said, “I feel better now when I feel bad than I used to feel when I felt good.” He said, ‘As a Christian I feel better now when I feel bad than I used to feel when I felt good.’ Finding Christ puts us on a spiritual high from which our whole life gains new energy, meaning, and purpose. What we older Christians need to do is to tap into the **enthusiasm** we once had when we first encountered the divine call of Christ and accepted that call to us. We are not called to vegetate; we are called to sow the seeds of the

hope of Jesus Christ. God will water those seeds and give them growth. We need to let others see Christ's glory in us. Our lives need to be living witnesses of the great hope that dwells within us. "If it is to be, it's up to me," should be our motto, thanks to television preacher, Robert Schuller. If the world is to hear the message of Jesus Christ it is up to us. We are on the front lines in the spread of faith in Jesus Christ. This task will take all of our skill and devotion. It is our Number One task. It begins by simply loving others, for by our love they will begin to see the One who first loved us, Jesus our Savior. Jesus is the one who loved us even before we were conceived.

Transfiguration, after all, is something which all of us, in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, long for and seek. We want to be transformed to become better persons, better friends, better spouses, better parents, better grandparents, better whatever. We are not absolutely contented with ourselves in our present condition. We want to find our true selves. We want to escape our self-destructive habits--over-eating, smoking, drinking, and so forth. And we can only do that; we can only transform ourselves by linking up with Christ's power of love and mercy. And we need to extend that power of Christ's love and mercy to others around us.

Let us see God's transforming hand in our own lives. God will transfigure us. God will change us into the image God's Son has called us to be. He has transformed and called us to help him call and transform others.

I can remember one of my grandmothers, Grandmother Parrish, the one who lived in Alabama in the southern United States, who would always hold her arms wide open to her grandkids when we got out of the car to visit her after a six-hours long trip down to see her, and she would give us the biggest hug you could ever imagine. We knew Grandmother loved and cared for us. And that was usually followed by

eating her most delicious warm cinnamon rolls you could ever sink your teeth into, always hot, and always waiting for us as we came into the house after getting our big hug. (I guess that's why I love to walk past Cinnabon in the malls. They remind me of my loving Grandmother.) You just knew you were loved, this much [arms opened wide]. So I will share that love my Grandmother Parrish gave me today for you. Everyone in the deep South always had a knack for hugging—it was just expected. In the Southern United States, hugging is a necessity!

Today we hear something quite extraordinary, God's public declaration of his love for his precious Chosen Son, a Son who

would one day face a horrible death, but a death that would be fully redeemed since it was offered for all who believe in him, and a death that would not let him die for more than three days in the grave.

I think a lot of people probably do not get enough love or affirmation nowadays. We are all so intent on our pension or salaries, or our business, or whatever. We forget to love: we forget to live. And that is not at all what God was declaring on that mountaintop to those disciples. God was declaring that God's love is unboundless, without end, this big [holding our

arms this wide]. We cannot escape God's big hug, unless we run away very, very fast.

So today, if you can't remember anything else, remember that God loves you, each particular one of you, this much [arms held open wide]. It is God's special gift to you today.

I think that if we can share enough love, the world would transform in an instant. If we could twitter out, text out, phone out that love to all we know, the world would never be the same. So why don't we try that, beginning today? God loves each of us this much [arms opened wide]. We can change the world, the whole world, with love. There would be no

more fighting, no more conflict, no more disagreements, no more anything but love. I know that is a tall order, but we Christians need to start somewhere, so why not start with love?!

Love is the secret best evangelistic tool. Let a stranger know you love them, and you will make an instant positive impression. At first they may be hesitant, but we can win them over, I believe. When someone is drawn into our church services, we need to acknowledge how great a miracle has occurred. Two weeks ago it was amazing how many new faces appeared here in church, don't you think? Having a nice well lit breezy room was surely one 'draw', but it was the Holy Spirit's doing. Maybe we need

some big welcoming arms on a sign to help us. But in the interim, we'll have to open our own arms to others to bring them in.

We don't stand on formalities here, but we try to love everyone, even the unlovable, because we ourselves have received an infinite love we didn't deserve. So, we are in the business of giving love away, for free, actually.

We do have bounds, however, even though we may sound a bit sappy. I guess our grandparents taught us that. I rarely remember my grandmother admonishing me for anything, however. And one of my grandfathers always would slip me a spoonful of coffee at breakfast, quite the sinful thing, I thought, as he always

did it with a wink, so his wife, my other grandmother, wouldn't see him. And I learned to love eating Cheerios, because he usually ate Cheerios for breakfast. I seem to be in a very reminiscing mode today! But when we are sharing love, we are likely doing that because someone loved us this much [opened wide arms]. Maybe it was our grandparents, it was mine, maybe it was a favorite aunt or uncle, or parents, or neighbors, or friends' parents. But when we come into contact with others we have to summon all the love we have ever had and show that love to others. That will change the world, don't you know?

God knew that the world would be forever changed by his Chosen Son, not by miracles so much as by love. Miracles would be the way God would heal our boo-boos--kiss them with a miracle, like our mothers or fathers did when we hurt ourselves. God would lean over with his Son's hands and kiss someone's boo-boo. Then they would be well, completely well. We are not so adept yet at doing the healing thing, but we can make up for it by spreading God's love, don't you think? And God will heal all of us in time, eternally, forever, by the love God's Son showed for us on Good Friday.

Someone has estimated that the average church member has heard 6,000 sermons and 8,000 prayers; they have sung 20,000 hymns but have introduced zero, zero, persons to Jesus Christ. Will sermon 6,001 persuade you to witness your faith to one other person who has not yet found Christ in their lives? Let us hope so.

This week, come to one of our Ash Wednesday services, if you can. We will be practicing our love. And this week, practice your love also to everyone you meet. Tell them you got some of that love here.

Amen and amen.

“Having Mountaintop Experiences”

Description: Christ’s love extends to all. We are the ones to make the love of God in Christ real to others. Recall how someone who loved us dearly was so comforting and encouraging.

Tags: Jesus, Christ, love, grandmother, grandfather, hugs, Willemstad, Curacao, Venezuela, Bishop, Jefforts-Shori, Helmin Magno Wiels, mountaintop, Rogers, children, television, comforting, enthusiasm, miracle, evangelism, Episcopal, Church, heal, prayers,

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peace