

**“Mountaintop Vision”**  
Mark 9-2-9  
February 11, 2018  
Rev. Dr. Jeong Park  
Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Some of you, especially our Scouts crews may never have heard about this church term. I want to emphasize that it is not ‘transformation’ but ‘transfiguration’!



I found this interesting discussion in this picture with the title. “Jesus’ laundry secret-the Gospel for the last Sunday after Epiphany.” One guy says, “How does he get the garments so dazzling white?” The other gentle responding, “He won’t tell. Just says, It is a Messiah’s secret.” The word, *transfiguration* means “a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state”. In other words, it indicates in our Scripture reading “Christ’s appearance in radiant glory to three of his disciples.”

Roman Catholics celebrate the transfiguration on the second Sunday of Lent, but most Christian denominations celebrate this Sunday, the first Sunday before Lent. Our Methodist church celebrates Jesus’ transfiguration as revelation of Christ’s glory “before the passion” so that we may be “strengthened to bear our cross and be changed into his likeness.” We are going to begin off the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, the 14 and this will last for forty days before Easter on the first of April. The whole focus of Lent is about a spiritual discipline and practice to renew our spirit by walking in the way of Jesus’ cross. And we will rediscover our baptismal confession that we will renounce the evil and affirm our commitment and faith to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Why does Jesus’ transfiguration matter to us? What message can we find from today’s Scripture reading that speaks to us and church? Let us begin to see and figure out what was happening on the mountain when Jesus stayed with his three disciples, Peter, James and John. These three disciples were having an incredible spiritual experience on the mountain. Briefly, it is about three things. First, they saw Jesus’ clothes becoming dazzling white. Second, they witnessed that Jesus was talking to Moses and Elijah who were Israelites’ legendary

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/transfiguration-sunday-why-do-we-celebrate-it-before-lent> Accessed Feb. 9 2018

spiritual leaders in their history. Lastly, they desired to stay and adhere to Jesus on the mountain because they assured themselves that Jesus is their Messiah. In verse 5, Peter confidently suggests to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (NRSV) What’s wrong with Peter?

As we already know the full story of Jesus’ passion, suffering, and crucifixion after this amazing mountaintop experience. Even though Peter and other disciples feel so good to be there celebrating and soaking themselves in the dazzling light of Jesus’ glory and hanging out with Elijah and Moses. But that is never good enough for them. A voice from the cloud says, “Listen to my beloved Son.” What was the voice from God? Rev. Susan Gamelin in her sermon, “Sermon for Transfiguration Sunday” reminds us that we hear Jesus’ voice in the other Gospels. Jesus says to his disciples, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” Do you also remember Jesus’ advice to his disciples as he goes through the passion and suffering? He says to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant to all.” When we listen, we hear: “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized.”<sup>2</sup> Do we understand and catch Jesus’ whole point and the purpose of his dazzling transfiguration?

Jesus never intended to glorify himself in his ministry. He did not call and invite his followers for his self-contentment and fame in his own private place. Rather he rebuked his disciples and reminded them of his mission purpose to serve his people around them. Jesus didn’t want to stay on a mountain with his fans. In verse 9, Jesus took his disciples down the mountain and prepared for his life-giving ministry to the people. Friends, Jesus’ whole message and his spiritual focus is not in the ‘glory’ but ‘service’ in the community, not self-pride, but care for others! Christian love is not about egotistic love for your own profit and benefit but to love others in your faithfulness and responsibility!

In this sense, there is a common ground between our church’s mission and our Scout’s ministry. Our Fair Oaks United Methodist Church’s mission is to promote the love of Christ and nurture spiritual growth for each individual, the church and the community. I found Boy Scouts’ spirit and mission in your Scout promise and law. They state,

---

<sup>2</sup> From Rev. Susan Gamelin’s sermon’ script, “Sermon for Transfiguration Sunday”, [http://day1.org/979-sermon\\_for\\_transfiguration\\_sunday](http://day1.org/979-sermon_for_transfiguration_sunday) Accessed Feb.9 2018

On my honor I will do my best.  
To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law;  
To help other people at all times;  
To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

I found a couple of similar spiritual principles: First, spiritual relationship with God; Second, your sense of duty and responsibility and the last, compassionate heart to others. I am so proud of you and for your good work not only for yourselves but also for our community. Scouting ministries have been one of our best leadership building programs in the nation and all over the world. As a part of the United Methodist Church, we are pleased to sponsor and support your good ministry at our church campus. Especially, our church deeply appreciates being the beneficiary of many Eagle Scouts' projects on this campus. The ramps and walkway provided people with disability to access our facility, and the patio for a fellowship place. Your service makes a difference to our church and our community.

After the mountaintop Transfiguration experience, Jesus' great vision on a mountain was to reach out to people in the communities and to spread the good news of God's love for all. He took risk to love people going through the passion. He didn't remain in his Judaism spiritual, social and cultural comfort zone. Rather he dared to stretch his life devotion beyond his own circle of relationships. Jesus always stepped across social boundaries and offered hope to those who were in despair. The mission of church is not for the insiders only. Instead, it is *only for Jesus*, which means to provide mission and service to others.

Dear Scouts and Fair Oaks congregation, all of us are called to come down from the mountain and serve our communities with a sense of mission and responsibility in our compassion and love. In this sense, church ministries and the Scouting activities share the same mission to help others and transform our surroundings into a better place. I hope we continue to listen and act upon God's call as participants of God's movement. Let us continue to make differences in all that we do together. Amen.