Worship Resources for February 7th, 2016—Transfiguration Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-43a

Narrative Lectionary: Transfiguration, Mark 8:27-9:8 (Psalm 27:1-4)

On this last Sunday before Lent, we begin with the story of Moses coming down from the mountain, with his face shining, and the people afraid of his appearance. Moses didn’t know that his face shone from talking with God. When the people came near, Moses gave them the law that he had been given on Mt. Sinai. Afterwards, Moses wore a veil except when he spoke with God, but that was he didn’t frighten the people with his shining face.

Psalm 99 sings of God who establishes justice and equity, and rules over all the earth. The psalmist calls upon the people to worship God, remembering that Moses and Aaron were the priests of God, and that Samuel was a prophet of God. God gave the people the law, and forgave them, though they still bore the consequences of their actions. The psalmist concludes with another call to worship God at the holy mountain.

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 uses the image of Moses wearing the veil as a metaphor for being veiled from God, unable to see God fully, and with Christ, the veil has been removed. God has come among us as Christ Jesus, and God is present in the Spirit that is among us. God’s glory, once veiled, is now reflected through a mirror. With the Spirit of God, there is freedom, and there is endurance and encouragement.

The passage from Luke contains both the account of the Transfiguration and what happened the next day. In Luke’s account, Jesus has taken Peter, John and James up the mountain to pray. While they are there, Jesus’ clothes become dazzling white and the appearance of his face changes. Peter, James and John are “weighed down with sleep” but stay awake for this, as Moses and Elijah come to talk with Jesus. Peter, of course, wants to immediately make tents for the three, and Luke’s account reads that Peter didn’t know what he was saying. When the voice comes from the cloud, in Luke’s account Jesus is referred to as “my Son, my Chosen.” Once the voice has spoken, Jesus was found to be alone. The next day, a man comes to Jesus begging him to look at his son who has a spirit that causes seizures, but the disciples weren’t able to do anything about it. Jesus condemns the “faithless and perverse generation” and heals the boy. The man had not been able to find help, even among the disciples, and had begged Jesus to take a look at his boy.

The Narrative Lectionary also focuses on the Transfiguration, but from Mark’s account. In Mark’s account, Jesus asks the disciples who do people say that he is. After Peter answers that he is the Messiah, Jesus teaches them that the Son of Man will be betrayed, and will suffer and be killed. Peter tries to talk him out of it by rebuking him. Perhaps Peter didn’t want to hear it. So Jesus replies with “Get behind me Satan!” Peter was setting his mind on worldly things. And after teaching the disciples along with the crowd that they needed to take up their cross to follow him, six days later Jesus goes up the mountain with Peter, James and John, and his appearance changes before them, and Moses and Elijah appear with him. Mark’s account is similar to Luke’s above, but the voice calls Jesus “my Son, the Beloved.”

Psalm 27 begins with this beautiful phrase of knowing God as one’s light and salvation, and that there is no fear of anything with God. The psalmist asks in verse 4 to dwell with God all the days of their life, and to behold the beauty of God.

The Transfiguration is one of those strange stories where we don’t really know what happened, or why Peter responded the way he did, but Peter, James and John experienced Jesus differently, and understood Jesus’ relationship to God in a new way. In that moment on the mountain, heaven and earth intersected.

Call to Worship

Turn our thoughts away from the busy-ness of the world;

 **Turn our minds to you, O Christ.**

Turn our hearts away from the desires of this world;

 **Turn our love towards one another and you, O Christ.**

Turn our whole selves away from ways of this world;

 **Turn us to love, compassion, and justice, O Christ.**

In this time of worship,

 **May we be one in spirit, mind, and body,**

 **Worshiping Christ Jesus, who calls us to love. Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, we confess we are still setting our mind on worldly things even though you give us glimpses of the heavenly kingdom. You show us great love and mercy but we are unwilling to show love and mercy to others. You share with us a vision of eternal life but we are focused on our lives now and worldly gains in this lifetime. Forgive us for being shortsighted. Renew in us the call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with You, so we may also live in the kingdom now, with eternal life that begins now. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Christ sees you as one of his own. You are God’s beloved. You are forgiven and loved, and given the strength and courage to love and forgive others. Let your love shine, as God’s love shines in you. Amen.

Prayer

Shine Your face upon us, O Christ, so that we might see one another as made in God’s image. Shine Your face upon us, O Christ, so that we might love one another as You have first loved us. Shine Your face upon us, O Christ, so that we might remember that the line between heaven and earth is very thin, and that eternal life begins now. Shine Your face upon us, O Christ, so that we might remember that we are not alone, that You have never left us, but You will return to us in a new way. All of this we pray. Amen.