

John Sampson
"Keeping the Light"
Text: Luke 9:28 - 36
Preached at KVCC
March 3, 2019

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

Throughout Christmas and into the season of Epiphany, which ends today, we sing a carol that asks who is this child that has been born in the manger to a couple of nobodies, on the edge of the Empire.

What child is this
Who laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?

We ask this question, we sing this question, because at first glance this child named Jesus looks like a normal baby. He looks just like you or me when we were born. But if we look closer, if we look with the eyes of our spirits, we might just see, like those sacred magicians from the East, that there was something more than meets the eye with this boy.

And because Jesus' story is our story it invites us to look at ourselves, and our neighbors, with the eyes of our spirits and if we do we might just see there is something more than meets the eye with all of us.

What children are we
Who are laid to rest
On our parents lap sleeping?

And what is the answer that our carol gives us? It's nothing less than a revelation of something wonderful and unexpected.

This, this is Christ the king
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing

But what's more...

We, we are Christ the king
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing

Throughout our season of Epiphany we've been exploring what it means that our tradition's stories are not just about Jesus, but that they give us a sacred anthropology of ourselves. They show us in a mirror who we are, who we could become, and what our potentiality really is.

They tell us that we are born in the image of God and that the lives of all humanity are of ultimate value.

They tell us that our greatest calling in life is to help the poor, restore sight to the blind and free those who are oppressed. And we reflected on the lives of John Brown and Martin Luther King Jr. as models of what this work might look like in our world today.

They tell us that the "E" word, evangelism, isn't a dirty word if it means we share the good things of our lives, and of this community, and then let God's spirit work as it will with what we have given.

They tell us that our true community is one where we the members give and receive freely the blessing we have with each other.

They challenge us to create and extend community to all of God's children, and that this is an ongoing process that deepens over time. Our celebration last Sunday of becoming an Open and Affirming congregation is an expression of this invitation.

And it is the actualization of this icon of humanity, this understanding of what it really means to be a child of God, not just in one person, not just in the future, but right here among all us that is worthy of our praise, and worthy of our song.

This, this is Christ the king
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing

This, this is the truth of who we are as a people. And it's dazzling and seems almost a supernatural miracle to our minds and hearts when they are focused only on ourselves, and our needs and our wants. This, this is the reality of what it means to see ourselves on the mountaintop, at the meeting place and the comingling of humanity and divinity. This, this is what we look like when we work and live out of love and compassion for one another.

And contrary to what the authors of our reading wrote I think Peter knew exactly what he said when he saw his own potential reflected in his teacher, and the prophets he loved. This, this is what he wanted to keep and hold on to. That's why Peter offered to build three huts to contain the holiness he witnessed. He wanted to capture and sustain the brilliant revelation of who Jesus was, and who Peter imagined he himself could become. Wasn't this what he had prayed for? Wasn't this the teaching he followed?

Isn't this what we pray for too? Aren't the moments when we see and experience the radiance of love and compassion in our lives and in our world, aren't these the moments we

seek to capture and save? Aren't these moments when we see humanity in a different light, a dazzling and maybe even unexpected light?

But then the moment is over, isn't it?

Perhaps the authors were right when they said that Peter didn't know what he was saying because he could never really capture and save the image of the possibility of humanity he was given. Almost as soon as he experiences the transfiguration of Jesus the light is gone, the prophets have disappeared, and everything has returned to normal.

Almost as soon as we experience the potentiality of humanity living together in love and compassion, not in some fictional world, but in this world, the vision and the reality can be gone. And everything returns to normal. And we find ourselves living with our own brokenness, and the brokenness of those around us, once again.

But the teaching of Epiphany and of this day of Transfiguration is this. The light of humanity is always there, even if it is hidden by our flaws and our failings. The light of our potential as children of God is never lost because we are the ones God has chosen, and with whom she is well pleased. And even though there are moments when this light may seem to have died, it will shine again because:

This, this is Christ the king
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing

And the children of God say, AMEN.