

Come, Light of the world, reveal yourself to us, we pray.

Here we are, the end of the season of Epiphany,
when we celebrate the Light of the World.

On Wednesday, our church world moves into another mode as Lent begins.

Each year we mark the transition with this strange – and familiar – story:

The trek up the mountain, the revelation of Jesus as brightest light,

the appearance of Moses, the giver of the Law,

and Elijah, the foremost of the prophets.

Imagine if you were Peter, James or John – your mind would be blown.

What happens next stuns them into silence: they become enveloped in a cloud
and hear a voice saying Jesus is the Son of God.

They all hear the same voice, which is what makes it so terrifying.

But that may be exactly why Jesus brings three with him –

in Jewish law, testimony often required three witnesses.

These disciples were brought to that experience so they could know that

Jesus was who he said he was, and who his miracles revealed him to be.

They were shown this so that they could bear witness.

So it's interesting that the first thing Jesus says to them on the way home is,
"Don't tell anyone.... Yet."

The time for telling would come, after the tumult of his arrest and crucifixion,
after the even greater mystery of his resurrection, which he predicts here.

Then, his followers would need to hear from these three leaders

what they had experienced on that mountain.

Even then, perhaps some thought they had just gotten their stories together –
but most early Christians believed them.

This odd tale appears in three of our gospels and is supported by

Peter's testimony in the second letter attributed to him:

*We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power
and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

*For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was
conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying,*

*"This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard
this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.*

Eyewitnesses of his majesty. Personal experience.
They were brought up that mountain to see Jesus, shining in the light of his glory.
And then to return to regular life and bear witness.
The time for telling the stories has come.

Why does God bring us here every week? Why do we bring ourselves?
Many come here in hopes of a divine encounter, some glimpse,
even momentary, of transcendent love beyond what we can see and touch.
It's why I'm here – I want to connect with Jesus. It's why I do this ministry –
in hopes of facilitating our having an experience of God, of holy power and love.
I can't make it happen, any more than a midwife can give birth for her patient –
I can only help try to position us and facilitate new life –
to hope that here, in this place, we see Christ as he truly is.

Symbolically, we hike up the Mount of Transfiguration every Sunday.
We don't often get a light show – we are offered quieter glimpses of his reality,
when something we hear registers in our spirits;
when we feel a surge of feeling during a song or hymn;
when our hearts are touched during prayer
or we experience God's holy presence in bread and wine.
We experience Christ's reality in our gathered-ness as his Body, the church,
made whole, and then broken again to feed the world on the Bread of Life.

We are brought here so we can bear witness to resurrection life
when we come back down into our ordinary lives. .
So that when we see Christ out there, so we can say, "Look, there's Jesus!
In that person who is homeless, or that woman who is hungry,
in that child who has no clothes, or that man who has no hope."
Those are some of the ways he said we'd encounter him.
And we can say, "I saw him on Sunday in Wayside. Let me tell you about it..."

If there is a moment when you are touched during your time here on Sunday,
tell someone about it – "We sang this beautiful song at church..."
or "I had a tough week, and then I reconnected with my church friends..."
Every time we speak of a spiritual experience, no matter how little,
someone else's faith is fed, someone else is encouraged to tell their story,
someone else's story is confirmed – "I'm not the only crazy one!"
someone else is affirmed to step out in prayer or to draw nearer to God.

Our stories have the power to open other people up to the light.

A few years ago, when I was in the process of moving here – I had started but was still commuting from DC, and not here every day.

I was asked to visit a dying woman, the wife of a member of La Plata's vestry. It wasn't convenient for them the day I was down here, so when I came down again to sign my lease, I got in touch with Lynne, and said I'd come over.

But then she texted and said the afternoon was filling up.

"Do you just want me to stop in for a quick prayer today, and a longer visit another time?" I replied. I got no answer, so I headed back to DC.

But the traffic on Hawthorne was stopped, and then I saw cars in front of me making u-turns, so I did the same. Back on 301, I remembered I needed gas, so I did that, and as I prepared to leave town again, I checked my phone: now there was a text back from Lynne: "That would be great! Prayer hands emoji." So I went over there, and was able to pray with Lynne and Dianna. Dianna died the next day. It felt like I was prevented from leaving La Plata until I'd taken care of that divine appointment.

I know you have stories like that. As "miracle stories" go, it's a light one, but it reminds me of how God works.

And if I tell that story, it might just strengthen someone else's faith for the next thing God wants to do through us and among us.

Does anyone have a God story this morning?

Last Wednesday was the 20th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood.

I wrote that day, *"I have given myself to this enterprise we call "church," irrelevant to many, flawed and often halting in its mission - and yet still holding the potential to conduct God's healing power and love into this world. It is my mission to help activate the saints of God to do that, and it is a privilege beyond measure."*

God has brought new energy to Christ Church in the form of wonderful saints who have visited this past year and decided to stay.

They join us, ready to be activated to conduct God's healing power and love into this world, and to tell the stories of what happens when we do.

We are witness to the Light that heals, the Love that heals.

Bring it. Wear it. Shine it. Tell it.

Amen.

Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said 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." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

Exodus 24:12-18

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

2 Peter 1:16-21

We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been **eyewitnesses of his majesty**. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this **as to a lamp shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.