

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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HOLDING COUNSEL

The Rev. Andrew F. Kline

Text of a Sermon preached the Last Sunday after Epiphany

February 27, 2022

EXODUS 34:29-35 | PSALM 99

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12—4:2 | LUKE 9:28043A

Close your eyes. Say a prayer. Breath in. Breath out. See a table set before you, here, on the mountain, in the wilderness. Draw near with faith. Sit. Look around you with open mind and open heart.

To your table you may invite anyone, living or deceased, who truly has your best interest in mind. Invite them to sit. There. With all of your guests sitting now at your table, ask them if they love you.

And now to your table, invite your higher self. The part of you that is much greater than anything you have done or not done, anything you have or do not have. There. Now ask your eternal, higher self if you love you.

And now to your table invite your higher power, whoever or whatever it is to you. For us, Jesus is here, the crucified and risen Lord. The living Word of the Holy One. The face of the uncreated light. Ask the one who was, who is, who is to come, if he loves you.

And now, with all of those present, right now, ask, “What do I need to know right now? What do they need to tell me? Listen.”

Jesus went up on the mountain to pray, taking with him Peter, James and John. There he was transfigured before them, radiating the heavenly light that is brighter than the earthly light reflected by the sun. Awakening from their drowsy inattention, then protected by a cloud, the disciples caught a glimpse of what the saints rightly call ‘the uncreated light’ that God first spoke into space and time.

This story could not be more central to the revelation of who Jesus is. It could not be more central to understanding why he has come to us. Every gospel speaks of it, even John’s gospel in its opening pages, reminding us of the Logos, the Word that is a light that banishes the darkness.

But only Luke’s gospel tells us the all important detail of what was spoken of between Moses and Elijah in the moment. Jesus has summoned the bearers of the law and the prophets, and he speaks to them about his ‘departure.’ Yet the word in Greek is more precise. He speaks to them of his ‘exodus.’

Moses and Elijah each had unfinished business. And since they both experienced different aspects of the transformation that awaits Jesus and were shaped by the same challenges, Moses and Elijah can help Jesus prepare to walk the whole way through the waters of deliverance, from the obedience of suffering and death, to the skies of rebirth.

The transfiguration, like the wondrous birth and mysterious resurrection of Jesus, are among the events that seem least translatable to our experience. They belong solely to who Jesus is. Yet the church

from the beginning has understood that it stands at the center not only of a revelation, but of a pattern of divine life that we are invited to participate in.

Scripture tells us that the wise and the righteous will shine like the sun. St. Paul tells us that Moses came down the mountain with an after glow so strange that all who saw him could not look at him and hid their faces from him in terror. He assures us that the reflected glory that awaits us as we become more and more like Christ will reveal itself from within. There will be a day when we will be able to behold his glory. We will see him face to face, and we will be like him.

Dr. Lisa Miller, professor of neurobiology and psychiatry at Columbia University in New York City was giving a lecture about how her laboratory, and scientist around the world, are beginning to document how spiritual practices change the brain and how prayer and belief create psychological and physical resilience, especially in young adults.

Midway through her lecture she couldn't stop looking at a couple at the back of the room who looked up at her with bright penetrating attention. After the lecture she rushed to the back of the hall and introduced herself. She discovered two individuals, clinician and social worker, who would change the course of her research, who saved countless juvenile offenders from a life in prison, and adopted 26 children.

When she asked them over dinner what was their secret, the couple waited for the dining room to clear and explained to her that at a certain point in their treatment of these teenagers who had been remanded to their custody and had usually just one more chance not to repeat violent, abusive and self destructive behavior, they would take them out into the Utah desert, an hours drive from their clinic, and invite them to understand that they were not alone, that they were not bound by a limited perspective of time and place, that they could call together the view of both heaven and earth. They called this "holding counsel".

And so they invited Dr. Miller to incorporate this in what she had uncovered in her research. As she was invited to hold counsel, and later invited many of her subjects and patients to do the same, she added

more and more evidence to the possibility that there is more than our material achieving brains, that there is an awakened brain, that leads to an awakened heart.

The Weavers were Christians. They had had an experience of hearing a voice that said, “this is my beloved Son. My Chosen. Listen to him!” They had learned how to share that with the young people that came into their lives. First, wake up the brain, then wake up the heart. Believe, see the light, then stay just long enough to hear what is said.

Gary Weaver asked Lisa Miller to think of those who loved her, her sense of her higher sense, her belief in a higher power – and close her eyes.

Do dear friends, it is time to hold counsel.

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And now, with all of those present, right now, ask, “What do I need to know right now? What do they need to tell me? Listen.”

Now. As the presences recede. The voices and the cloud recede. Head down the mountain, to face whatever it is that awaits you, with your eyes, and ears, and heart wide open, reflecting what has been given you, a light from within, from one degree of glory to another. Amen.