

I don't know if you ever have this experience, but sometimes when I'm reading a scripture text, especially when I'm working with a text for a Bible study or a sermon, a song comes into my mind. Sometimes it's a hymn or a church-y song. Other times it's something else. This week it was something else. Reading about the transformation of the face of Moses when he came down from the mountain, and then transfiguration of Jesus – both of them glowing in an other-worldly way – brought to my mind an old song from the late 60s/early 70s: “Babe Rainbow” by Melanie.

The lyrics go: Babe rainbow; Keep your glow on; There's a show on you know;
And they're all gonna be there; Put the gleam in your eyes; And do somethin' to your hair;
Keep your glow on.

Melanie obviously wasn't referring to Moses or Jesus, although Moses did keep his glow on after he came down from the mountain. And on Transfiguration Sunday, we wonder about the glow that Peter, James and John saw on Jesus and what it means for us. On this last Sunday of the Epiphany season, the season of illumination and revelation, the radiance of the star gives way to the radiance of Jesus. This Sunday is a transition Sunday, as we anticipate moving toward the grayness of Ash Wednesday and the shadow of the Good Friday cross.

But as much as we know that we cannot remain on the mountaintop forever, we also do not want to leave too quickly either. For us, the song may not need to encourage us to *keep* our glow on, but to *get* our glow on in the first place, as it relates to our spiritual lives. We learn from this gospel about how Jesus, like Moses, is set apart by this encounter with God. But it doesn't mean that the rest of us can't also experience God in life-transfiguring ways and get *our* glow on.

Remember the Christmas gospel from John: “the true light that enlightens everyone, was coming into the world”? That Christmas message that we received two months ago is an invitation for each of us to embrace, express, and expand the divine light that is continually emerging in our lives and communities, even when we're not consciously aware of it. This is not a denial or denigration of the specialness of Jesus' experience on that mountaintop, rather a caution that if the Transfiguration is relegated only to an event in Jesus' life, then it has little relevance for us - if we don't seek transfiguration in our own lives, if we don't practice transformation.

We can see from the experiences of Moses and Jesus that they practiced transfiguration by going up on holy mountains to seek communion with God (mountains, traditionally in scripture were “thin places” of divine transparency). We too can create our own sacred times and spaces. We can create what Barbara Brown Taylor calls “an altar in the world” that awakens us to experiences of the holy.

Of course the church should be such a place. Someone has said that “the church is called to be a laboratory for spiritual experiences, a place where we expect God to “show up” in our lives in life-changing ways.” I think we could call this “getting our glow on.” And these passages invite us to consider how we do this, how we can practice transfiguration.

First, they call us to explore the spirituality of place, not just this place, this sanctuary, although hopefully it is a holy place for us. But where else? Where is your holy place? Where is the mountaintop that promotes your personal transfiguration? It's not necessarily a literal mountaintop. For me, it's often the ocean. But it can be anywhere; your “altar in the world” might be an altar in your own living room. Or out in nature somewhere. If you have such a place, think about that place now and imagine yourself there, and make a promise to yourself to go there as often as you can. And if you don't have such a place, think about how you can make or claim a sacred space for yourself.

The second call of these passages is their invitation to us to consider the spirituality of time, again not just this 5:00 on Sunday time, although hopefully it is a sacred time. We do put a lot of thought into how to make this space and time a “laboratory for spiritual experience.” But when else? When are your other holy times? Do you have times that you regularly devote to prayer, meditation, retreat, devotional reading, spiritual direction, conversation with a spiritual friend? Now I will admit that I am not good at the once a day, get up early and spend an hour reading the Bible discipline. But I do value the text study I do each week for sermon preparation, not just for sermon preparation, but for my own spiritual discovery too.

Today Orion taught our children about the practice of Christian meditation, and we’ve talked about having a session for adults too at a future Second Sunday School. And of course, our conference is a veritable laboratory for spiritual experiences. The resources available to us to claim sacred time for ourselves are varied and rich. But we each have to find our own practice, our own rhythm. The important thing is to find something, do it, and really expect God to show up and lead us into transformation.

The third thing these passages call us to consider is the importance of mission. It is significant that Luke follows the account of Jesus’ transfiguration with the healing of a child. With today’s medical knowledge, we suspect that the so-called demon possession might have been epilepsy. The fact that first century medicine doesn’t hold a candle to that of the 21st century doesn’t take away from the fact that Jesus could mediate the energy of transformation to bring wholeness and restoration to a child and his family. And this brings us to the realization that transfiguration leads us beyond ourselves to become God’s partners in healing the world.

Transfiguration leads to mission, to claiming our vocation as “lights of the world,” getting our glow on through acts of mercy, kindness, and justice. We do this as a congregation in many ways. Last night ELM honored First United and St Francis for the actions taken 20 years ago with the calls to Jeff, Ruth, and Phyllis. Watching the video clips, hearing the stories of those who were there, acknowledging the historic import of those actions, got our glow on – not in a back-slapping way of “Hey, look at us, aren’t we great?” but almost as a marveling at how God was working.

And we do this in so many other ways as well. We also do it as individuals and as families. Some of you do it specifically as part of your professional life, even political life. Even so, it’s good to ask the question and to affirm: In what ways are prayer and mission, spirituality and social concern, connected in your life?

As we approach Lent, we think about Jesus and the experience of transfiguration on the mountain, but then being driven back down into the complexities of the world and toward the crosses of personal and social injustice and conflict. And we know that this is our path as well. As we prepare to walk the Lenten path once again, we take the glow of transfiguration with us.

Because God does show up – here at 5:00 Sunday evening, and oh, so many moments in the midst of our daily lives. Some questions to ponder as we go:

Where are you experiencing God today?

Where are you putting up obstacles to God’s freedom and surprise in your life?

How could you cultivate an awareness of God in your daily life?

How can you get your glow on? And keep your glow on

There’s a show on you know; And they’re all gonna be there;
Put the gleam in your eyes; And do somethin’ to your hair;
Keep your glow on.

Amen

