

In the Name of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

The transfiguration of Jesus. If ever there was a gospel reading begging for it, this is the sermon within which we need to use our imagination, and try to re-imagine how we hear and how we see.

So, now imagine being Peter, James or John in this reading, and you three are taken by him up on a high mountain. Again, here is the gospel account:

**“ And he was transfigured before them...and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.” “And from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”**

How did **you** hear that passage? “Dazzling white” and “bleach”. Did you get the image of a Clorox commercial? I have asked this question in the past on this reading: Is this the most believable miracle of our scriptures that somehow Jesus was able to make his clothes a whiter white? Brighter brights?? On the surface, it does sound silly...but there are some nuggets of truth here.

Is not it true that our life experiences influence how we perceive life? Maybe it **IS** the most believable miracle of our scriptures to “see” whiter whites...because, even if we do not see it in our own wash, we certainly “see” it in our television commercials. Does not it really seem more real, or at least more believable to see it on TV as opposed to reading it in the Bible?

Alright, let us use our imagination. Start our re-imagining of seeing and hearing scripture.

Many of us now have, or have had a little child or children, or grandchild or grandchildren, at one time about three or four years of age. And many of us have read aloud some favorite bedtime stories to them. Works by Doctor Seuss such as the “Cat in the Hat”, or “Green Eggs and Ham”. Cinderella. Jack and the Beanstalk. And so on.

Are **any** of those stories factually true as having historically occurred? Are they reportable like the news....time, places, dates, persons, identities, and so on?

No, of course not. But, still, **HOW** did you present them to the child when you read it? Do you remember that? Was it something like this?

**“ And he was transfigured before them...and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.” “And from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”**

Why did you read that bedtime story in that way?

To share in the child’s wonder of it all.

To actually **encourage** the child’s wonder of it all.

To encourage the child's **imagination**.

Do you remember how good you felt, how delighted you were, when you shared the wonderment with that child?

OK, now, I want to make it perfectly clear that I am NOT saying our scriptures are fictional like some children's fairy tales. But I **AM** saying that God calls us to encourage **our imagination**. To encourage the opening of our "hearing" and "seeing" into the wonder and mystery of the living God, focused today in the transfiguration event and story of Jesus.

God is calling us to see and hear the world in a different way. Through the eyes and ears of wonder, and mystery, and imagination. Of seeing and hearing...and living life..in reality, for sure...but also with a sense of anticipation for the mysteries around us, and using the hearts within us.

It is a great shame how so many of us ignore, neglect, devalue, or scorn a prophet's ecstasy, the dreamer's vision, and the worshiper's conviction that he or she has heard God speak. Most of us are convinced that our faith is about doing good things, about showing love and care for one another, and...of course...it is so. But, our faith is also about the yearning to see God and experience the power and love of God. It is about being touched by the Spirit and being moved by the voice of the Lord whispering in our ears. Our faith is so rich, our God so good, that it makes no sense at all to limit what is possible for us in terms of what we should or should not do each day. Life is challenging enough. Why should we artificially make it more difficult than it already is? But we do. We make life more difficult because we are too limited in vision, or imagination to be open to the greater life within us and around us.

Our faith is about entertaining angels, every bit as much as it is about seeking to comfort the afflicted and to heal the sick. It is about seeing visions of a new heaven and a new earth, every bit as much as it is about seeking justice and resisting evil. It is about being refreshed by God, as much as it is about refreshing others in God's name.

The mistake we often make as Christians is **not** the fact that we spend too much time seeking spiritual visions and revelations, and thereby neglect the truths and duties of everyday life in Christ. Rather, it is the fact that we do not believe in and thus are not open to the special moments, the special touches, that only God can give. While some say that they do not get fed and therefore are not helped or sustained by the church, many of us fail to recognize the food that is before us because we fail to take and eat what God seeks to give us.

Here in the gospels we see Jesus doing all these miracles and impossible things...raising the dead, walking on water, and so on. And, in our heart of hearts, do not we sometimes wonder about those stories? Well, ok, Jesus does these things... maybe...but like Thomas who needs to see more to really get into it, we think the written gospels do not seem to more clearly reveal HOW Jesus does it.

The vague problem of seeing with our eyes that see, and hearing with our ears that already hear.

I, myself...good old Father Jim...had been there, done that...for more decades than I care to remember. I was told that God kept calling me to “see and hear”. And I wondered, and I wandered for literally fifty years...”see and hear what?” Then, suddenly...through the power and love of God through Jesus Christ, as the “Beloved One” transfigured before their very eyes in the vision heard today, and trusting and submitting to God through Christ, the journey really and finally began.

The shock to me, initially, was that it was not only allowed, but actually encouraged..that we can actually think about, and encounter God in a different way. Communicate in broader ways. Use the gifts of **imagination** and excitement and discovery that God gives each one of us. Through our faith in the living God, we come to know God as no phony...but only if we allow ourselves to let go....to anticipate and welcome that sense of wonderment and mystery, and to be free to live into the fullness of the life here that God has blessed us with...through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That we also may be transformed...in the eyes of God, dazzling white, all in the company of God known to us within the relationship as the Father, and as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit.

Amen.