

# *Sermon: Transfiguration II*

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Year A

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99 or 99:5-9

2 Peter 1:13-21

Luke 9:28-36

It can be easy to feel dragged down... pulled down... toward the darkness... and away from the light... we can try so hard... to get ahead... in the many ways we can try to get ahead... our health... our psychology... our spirituality... our finances... only to have people... or circumstances... forces beyond our control... frustrate our efforts... work against what we're working for... and that almost always happens unintentionally... in the most innocent ways... but sometimes... I pray far less often... with mean-spirited... forgive-them-for-they-don't-know-what-they-are-doing... intent... but either way... there are some things we can't change... and we must simply deal with them... though sometimes we spend a lot of time... maybe a lot of effort... trying to figure out whether it was unintentional... or on purpose... and then we've got to figure out what to do... with knowing that... we've got to figure out whether it's a battle worth fighting... or only worth letting go of... and we must choose whether to move forward... or get stuck where we are... or God forbid... slide back into darker thinking or behavior that often hurts no one but ourselves... lots of choices...

But today's Epistle reminds us that we should pay attention to the message that was given in vv. 1 - 12... which is... that God has given us... everything needed for life and godliness... it's like a lamp shining in a dark place... but we are not meant for darkness... we were created for light... and light is our inheritance... that's why we pay attention to the lamp only until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts... and we can see fully...

When my daughter was about six years old... she was looking at some photos of her mother... when her mom was about ten... her mother was standing inside an empty built-in swimming pool... peering over the edge... wearing sunglasses... and looking at

the camera... all in glorious... black and white... and Rachel paused for a moment... you could tell she was thinking deeply... and she turned toward her mom and said... *Mommy... when you were little... before there was color...*

Before there was color... when things seemed dull... and maybe even boring... when we were in the Kansas part of The Wizard of Oz... and not yet in the technicolor golden yellows and kelly greens of Oz itself... but Rachel was only thinking about what she knew... only questioning what was in her experience... her world was one of color... she had seen color photos... and photos that she knew were older... were in black and white... so obviously... at some point there was only black and white... and then there was color... right...

But can you imagine how it must be... for some people to not see color... how not seeing all colors must diminish one's experience... without you even knowing that your experience has been diminished... or you know from what your parents have told you... that you can't see what so many others can see... it might contribute to you feeling less than... instead of equal to...

Can you imagine how not seeing all colors informs what you know... may determine how you function... like not seeing the red in red lights... or purple... how not seeing the full range of color... can limit certain possibilities... if not your vocation... then the full experience of your life...

Only about one in 200 women have color blindness... though it's more accurately called color deficiency... but inherited color deficiency affects one in twelve men... people with normal color vision... can see about one million distinct shades of color... those with color deficiency can see only about 50K colors... but two years ago... a company called EnChroma... began to manufacture and sell glasses that correct this visual limitation... and there are some pretty moving... pretty emotional videos on YouTube... of people seeing in full color... for the first time in their lives...

On March 18, 1958... Thomas Merton... a monk and mystic... saw something for the first time in his life... he was in downtown Louisville, KY... he was running errands for the Abbey at Gethsemane... a Cistercian monastery... *at the corner of Fourth and Walnut... he wrote... in the center of the shopping district... I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people... that they were mine... and I was theirs... that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers... it was like waking from a dream of separateness... from the world of renunciation and supposed holiness... this sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud... I have the immense joy of being man... a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate... as if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me... now I realize what we all are... and if only everybody could realize this! but it cannot be explained... there is no way of telling people that they are all walking around... shining like the sun...*

*Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God... and while he was praying... the appearance of his face changed... and his face shone like the sun... and his clothes became dazzling white...*

Before there was color... the text says his appearance changed... but maybe this story... has less to do with how Jesus changed... and more to do with how the disciples' perception of Jesus changed... on Passion Sunday... we glimpsed Jesus in his vulnerability and his humanity... today... we see him in his glorious divinity...

And let's remember... just a little bit later in Luke... Jesus said... *These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you... that everything written about me in the law of Moses... the prophets... and the psalms must be fulfilled...* then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures... he opened their minds... the Greek could read... he revealed understanding in their thoughts...

He took away their color blindness... so they could see... maybe Jesus helped them put on a spiritual version of EnChroma glasses... that enabled them to see what was already there... in its fullness... in its radiance... enabling them to see what Thomas Merton saw...

And I don't think any of us... want the color vision we have now... to be like the black and white version of Kansas... we want it to be like the technicolor of Oz... we want the radiance of Transfiguration for ourselves... we want to be transformed into something more beautiful and elevated...

And although the disciples had Jesus... we have the Advocate... the Holy Spirit... and our minds... and our intellects... and our hearts... and practices that help form us... that help us see more of life... more color... more vibrancy... and one day we'll look back... and remember... when there was less color... when all we could see was a lamp burning in the darkness... before we were transfigured... before we even knew... we could be...

Mike+