

February 19, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Transfiguration Sunday** ~

“Listen to My Son!”

Our services can be found on our website at www.barrechurch.com

Scripture Reading: Matthew 17 v 1-9

I. Introduction:

It is wonderful to be around people who are simply full of energy and love and light. When they enter a room, everything changes. Some of them can tell a good old-fashioned story that makes the heart feel warm, others tell funny jokes and bring good laughter, and there are those who are good listeners, making one feel heard especially during difficult times. Those warm and fuzzy kind of people are all around us. Some have a gentle spirit, and others are a bit livelier. Do we know some of them? They can be little children, young adults, or some of us senior folks! We’re talking about the presence of someone or something maybe, that helps us find peace and joy within and brings light into our lives.

Light is an interesting phenomenon. We are surrounded by and engulfed in it throughout the day through the sunshine or brightness of the daylight. We can create certain environments by changing the kind of light we choose, a blue or orange, a day or soft light, all of which can help create a mood we desire to be in. Then there are many uses for the light we have and need in our lives, as we discussed a few weeks ago.

II. Listen to My Son!

While Jesus and His disciples did not live during a time of fancy lights and the convenience of switching on lights everywhere the way we can now, they had oil lamps with wicks in their homes giving them the light they needed. They used pottery for the base of the lamp, and the rich could afford glass for the base. They didn’t have streetlamps to light up their roads, instead they carried their lamps during their travels, and surely enjoyed the bright light of the sun or the moon during the evenings. So, the convenience we now have was not something they were used to.

For the three disciples in our passage to be called by Jesus, to walk up the mountain and see Him being engulfed in a bright light, His face shining and His clothes bright as light, then followed by a white cloud, must have been an overwhelming experience for them. The last time they experienced this kind of light was at Jesus' baptism, something so extraordinary... so outside their ordinary human experience. And then to hear God's voice from this bright cloud, which frightened them so much, that they fell to the ground, must have been an unforgettable experience they would never forget. What a privilege to hear God speak to them, and tell them this was God's Son, and that they need to listen to Him. These were the same words from God from the cloud at Jesus' baptism as well, "Listen to My Son!"

This transfiguration event was an event of light, but it was also an event that brought together the past and the present through the appearance of the heavenly figures of Moses and Elijah who both had their own mountain experiences, meeting with God, seeing God's glory, and hearing God's voice speaking to them. This experience makes Jesus into a new Moses, but more...He is the Messiah, and the disciples are receiving the command directly from God to listen to Him, the Son of God.

The transfiguration also follows the passage where the disciples were asked by Jesus what the people are saying about Him, and what they, the disciples were saying He was. Peter would declare that He was the Son of God and would be called the Rock upon which Jesus would build His church. Peter would become a leader in the church then. The transfiguration also follows Jesus' prediction of His death. The Son of Man would go through suffering and come out of it to show God's glory, which is beyond anything that can happen on earth. But, He says, no human suffering can ever diminish the power and the glory of God Most High, because through His death and Resurrection, the Kingdom of God stands firm.

So, this powerful intervention of God in and through Christ here on the mountain is God saying to them, I am here, and this is my Son! I am not gone. I know what is happening down here. I know the minds of people, and I know their hearts and I see their actions. I know pain and suffering, and I know you may be afraid when He talks about His own death.

But, if you listen to my Son and what He is teaching and showing you, you will experience the presence and the blessings I have for you.

III. Conclusion:

Light has the capacity to make one see so we can move around and read and do the things we want to do in life. It makes life comfortable, but it can also make one take for granted what we have when we have light, until something happens with the electricity, and it is dark.

Those people we talked about in the beginning are precious gifts from God who come into our lives as a blessing. One should not take them for granted, because they carry God's precious blessings inside of them. But ordinary human beings can never measure up to the light and joy that God brings. God's light is eternal and can never be extinguished. God's bright and sustaining light is meant to shake us into an awareness that while life can be challenging, we can move into that light by listening to the words of Christ who tells the disciples in this passage, "Don't be afraid", and elsewhere, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me." May the transfiguration story bring light into our lives today, and help us hear God's voice saying, "Don't be afraid, just listen to my Son." May God help us to be listeners of Christ's message of hope and guidance for our lives and help us to live our lives according to God's will. May God help us this week to think about how we can be the light to others around us. Amen.