

WORSHIP

Luke 9:28-43a
"Holy Mystery"

February 27, 2022 • 11:00am PST

ONLINE ONLY

 fcc TACOMA



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**Please stand if you are able*

Gathering Music

Welcome

Rev. Doug Collins

Prelude

FCC Trio

Golden Thread

Oh, had I a golden thread
And a needle so fine
I would weave a magic strand
Of rainbow design, of rainbow design
In it I'd weave the bravery
Of women giving birth
And in it I would weave the innocence
Of children of all the earth, children of
all the earth

Show my brothers and sisters my
rainbow design
I would bind up this sorry world
With hand and my heart and mind
Hand and heart and mind
Oh, had I a golden thread
And a needle so fine
I I would weave a magic strand
Of rainbow design, of rainbow design

Call to Worship

Margaret Cook

Holy Mystery!

We are drawn in the Spirit's tether,

Immersed in the ways of our God

Whose new and surprising revelations

Are nourishing, albeit sometimes hard to fully comprehend.

We gather for worship, remembering the dazzling Light

Which has shown Jesus on the mountain.

It is that Light which continues to shine for us

Paths of healing, of justice, of shalom.

Prepare to be amazed!

Prepare to be surprised!

Friends, let us worship!

*Opening Hymn

FCC Trio

Fairest Lord Jesus

CH 97

A Time for Prayer

Pastor Doug

*After a pastoral prayer is offered, worshippers are invited to light a candle at
a nearby station as we continue our time of prayer.*

"Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior"

Pass me not, O gentle Savior,
Hear my humble cry,
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.
Refrain:
Savior, Savior,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.
Let me at a throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition,

Help my unbelief. [Refrain]
Trusting only in Thy merit,
Would I seek Thy face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit,
Save me by Thy grace. [Refrain]
Thou the Spring of all my comfort,
More than life to me,
Whom have I on earth beside Thee?
Whom in heav'n but Thee? [Refrain]

Community Prayer

Pastor Doug

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer

From the New Zealand Prayer Book

Find this week's responsive prayer insert in your pew.

Scripture Reading

Margaret Cook

Luke 9:28-43a

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

³⁷On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at

my son; he is my only child. ³⁹ Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹ Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴² While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples,

The Word of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Pastor Doug

" Holy Mystery"

This morning, as we engage in our weekly hour of worship and prayer here in Tacoma, let us pause for a moment and remember our siblings in harm's way in Ukraine. It's about 9:30pm on now a fourth sleepless night where people, just like you and me, are trying to explain to their children why they can't sleep in their own beds and how it is possible that such evil can emanate from just one person's distorted views of life. I invite you to pause with me for a moment of silence.

God, we pray for peace, for the people of Ukraine, and for people all over the world who find themselves pressed with injustice and oppression, simply for the place they happened to be born. Give them strength to persevere. And give us a voice and a will to turn our holy anger and grief into actions for solidarity and peace. In Christ's name, amen.

This special day, Transfiguration Sunday, is set apart in our Christian calendar as a moment for us to ponder the divine ways of Jesus in his very human form, and likewise, to ponder the very human form of Jesus' very divine way. It's a story that bewilders many, though I would wager probably not as much as the sleepy trio we hear about who were there to see this glorious event before

their very eyes. Their names are Peter, John and James. They were setting out to do something that at least at this point in time probably didn't seem all that wild. Whether Jesus had been in their lives or not, this theme of witnessing God on a mountaintop wasn't a new one. After all, it was the kind of place where giants in the faith like Moses and Elijah had gone and seen the glory of God for themselves, where they had gone to pray and become captivated by mysterious works of their Creator and a clarity on what it was they were supposed to do with their lives from that point forward. Going to the mountain to hear God's voice a little more clearly isn't all that odd to most of us living in a place like the Pacific Northwest, where I happen to know that many of you share my own spiritual connection to nature and the importance we gain when we are elevated to higher ground, even for just a few hours.

It might appear odd to these three characters following Jesus up a mountain that the rest of the regular crew isn't with them. But then again, it's important to remember there was already a large grain of faith as made evident in each of their lives' journeys thus far, as they had already given up so much in faith so as to devote their lives to following Christ, not just spiritually, but also physically.

And in a swoosh of "what... that...", Jesus' face is said to have somehow changed. And a light as bright as lightning pierced through Jesus' clothes, and all of a sudden, it's not just Jesus standing there, but two others right next to him – it's Moses and Elijah, two familiar prophets who had led their people to safety in the shelter of God as they found it in the wilderness, two agents of God's love whose own lives had become testaments to a God who would stick with the people, who would lead them in a path through the thickets and debris to freedom and safety.

And, oddly enough, as it says in our text, in this miraculous moment, in the midst of this rare experience where Peter, James and John get an actual glimpse of the pioneers of their faith, it appears that the two angels are there to talk not with them, but with their friend, Jesus. They're not there to talk

about laws or covenants, they're not there to recite familiar psalms or to teach any new lessons about how to pray, they're there to discuss Jesus' imminent departure. You know the departure being discussed, it's the dark park of Jesus' life on earth, the point at which even the most dedicated followers of Jesus bow to their own fears of retribution and deny the one who had been walking alongside them all the way, giving way to Jesus' death. That moment at which he proclaims, "it is finished."

As good religious folk are want to do, those bleary-eyes followers are likely wondering whether their eyes are deceiving them. Despite all the amazing things they had witnessed thus far, despite the miracles of healing, despite the feeding of many with so little, this experience was truly something else. Still not quite getting it, but arguably probably tryng to do this best considering these wild circumstances, Peter's like, "Let's build a temple for you all!"

Not the point...as we soon find out.

As if no one even heard Peter, it seems the two who came to visit Jesus are there for one reason, to console their friend Jesus and to encourage him to carry on toward the path that was ahead, to take courage, even in the midst of the rejection he had faced from his own beloved community, not away from the sin of human miscalculation and violence, but directly toward Jerusalem, straight toward the cross which seemed to have already have his name on it.

This Wednesday, Ash Wednesday marks the start of our 40 day Lenten journey. We're going to do some heavy lifting to try and sift through some of the ways God might be redirecting our own lives, to examine anew the ways we are complicit in the destruction not just of our own neighbors, but sometimes of our own livelihoods and lives of faith. Where Jesus was met in the wilderness with temptation and suffering, he faced the adversity with a divine strength from which I know each of us have departed at least a time or two in our own lives.

But in this pivotal moment, right before that journey begins, we are let into this vision of a Jesus who seems to be having his own human struggle as he faces disbelief even by his own followers, even when they have given him so much faith thus far – how will this turn out? Can I really trust God? Even at the hand of human ignorance? Even at the prospect of death itself?

And the world pauses for a moment. And the voice of God, the parent, echoes into the cloud, “This is my son. Listen to him.”

Mystery. Holy, wild, confusing, sometimes unbelievable, wacky, gorgeous, mystery.

It’s a mystery we’re familiar with. The point of paradox between the God who says we are loved beyond measure, but also, that we shouldn’t let that keep us from working our whole lives to better reflect that love in our own actions.

Mystery – somewhere at the center between “Some of us are actually sleeping through life and many of us are often willfully and unwilfully distracted from the brilliant light of God, and yet still, God finds ways to get the message through anyway.”

A paradox revealing how on some days, even on those days we can be woefully ungrateful for the people in our lives and treat them as ends to a means, there are those other days when we are zapped into a reality that humbles us and reminds us that we are indeed reliant on each other, and how God’s mercy is with us, and our friends, and the people with whom we disagree, whether or not we’re mindful of them, whether we’re seeing the glass half empty or half full. A love that prevails in the peaks and valleys and the in-betweens, and in the face of evil, and in the brightest of mountaintop experiences.

A paradox, of how people like James, John and Peter can witness such a splendid sight as the transfiguration of their Lord, and yet, in the same breath be so shocked by it, they fail to tell anybody.

Whatever happened, however it appeared in real life, or however it might have dwelled in their mind's eye, the voice of God breaks through, bringing peace to the brokenhearted, rest for the weary, refuge for the endangered, freedom for the prisoner, food for the hungry, love for the world despite the world's ability to make sense of it.

Theologian Fredrich Buechner revels in the mystery of this story, noting a strange detail that while Jesus' clothes dazzle in white his face isn't seen to shine, but rather, it *changes*.

The Greek word for what changes, Eidos, meaning icon. The appearance of Jesus very face, the image of God, quote "the spittin' image of the Son who was his Father all over again – maybe this is what shone through in a way the disciples managed to miss seeing most days."

It was a mountaintop experience, one of those moments when the face of God was revealed in a human form.

And I can't help but think of the faces of those now fleeing danger and fighting for their lives, the faces of those on the frontlines in Ukraine, of children and women living in fear in Afghanistan, the faces of God on the people you see in line at the grocery store, or camped out on a cold night, the faces of youth being detained for drug offenses, the faces our family, of our perceived enemies....in ALL those faces, the very face of God.

The days ahead are unknown. The assurance of peace in this world is not what we live and move by, that is what is ours to set in motion and to work tirelessly for until we see honor the divine in every last human, just as God does.

God's love is the way, into the storm, through the grief, despite the unknown. So shall we revel in the mystery? God's face is surely to shine.

Amen.

“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Believe him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow
strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace
His word shall not fail you he promised

Refrain
O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Refrain

Call to Offering & Prayer of Thanksgiving

Pastor Doug

Offering can be placed at the conclusion of our service in one of the two trays located at the back of the sanctuary. You can also give online anytime at <http://bit.ly/fccgiving>.

Communion Hymn

FCC Trio

Beneath the Cross of Jesus
CH 197

Sharing God's Feast
communion prayer
musical meditation

Pastor Doug

***Closing Hymn**

FCC Trio

Blest Be the Tie That Binds
CH 433

Dismissal & Postlude

FCC Trio

Stand By Me
CH 629

Worshippers are asked to refrain from congregating indoors. We look forward to catching up in the courtyard.

Senior Pastor
Rev. Doug Collins (he/him)

Minister of Music
Benjamin Smith (he/him)

Comms. Asst.
Cassandra Tripp (she/her)

Sound Operator
Nate Dybevik (he/him)

Video/Tech Operator
Don Tripp (he/him)