

“Unveiled Glory”

The Gospel Lesson for today is read from Luke 9:28-36

Hear the words from the disciple Luke:

Read Luke 9:28-36

“The Word of God for the people of God.”

“Thanks be to God”

Let us pray:

Lord, thank you for Sunday. Thank you for a day of rest, a day when we have no more pressing business than to gather, to sing, to sit, to pray, to listen, to rest easy in your grace. We confess that we are too busy; too self-absorbed, too concerned about what we ought to do next, and how we look, and what we ought to feel. Cure us of our self-absorption. In this hour of worship, draw us out of ourselves and toward you. Allure us, O God. Beckon us. Then let us relax, let down our guard and bask in your glory. Amen.

Intro:

Recently, Netflix issued a warning after it’s psychological horror film “Bird Box” sparked a dangerous challenge being spread on social media.

“Can’t believe I have to say this,” [the tweet](#) begins. “PLEASE DO NOT HURT YOURSELVES WITH THIS BIRD BOX CHALLENGE,” Netflix tweeted on January 2. “We don’t know how this started, and we appreciate the love, but we have just one wish for 2019 and it is that you not end up in the hospital due to memes.”

I have yet to see the film, but in the movie, “Bird Box,” Sandra Bullock stars as a woman who tries to protect herself and a small group of people from a mysterious entity that drives anyone who sees it to commit suicide. To protect themselves, they block out windows and wear blindfolds if forced to go outside.

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The movie's premise has sparked an internet challenge, with people filming themselves trying to perform all kinds of tasks blindfolded — from mundane tasks like climbing stairs or [maneuvering around their homes](#) to driving a car.

Needless to say, people are getting hurt.

A teenage driver in Layton, Utah, crashed her car while wearing a blindfold – a stunt inspired by the Netflix movie "Bird Box"

"Bird Box Challenge while driving...predictable result," the Layton Police Department tweeted on Friday. "This happened as a result of the driver covering her eyes while driving on Layton Parkway. Luckily no injuries."

The blindfolded driver was a 17-year-old girl, and there was another 16-year-old in the car at the time of the crash, Lt. Travis Lyman of the Layton Police Department told CBS News.

The department tweeted photos of two cars involved in the crash – one was a pickup truck with the front bumper bent, the other was a smaller vehicle with the entire driver's side crushed.

Still the movie inspires internet copycats to take on the "Bird Box challenge," in which people filmed themselves doing everyday tasks blindfolded. The game is as viral as it is dangerous.

Fortunately, no one was injured in the Layton, Utah, crash, a representative at the police department told CBS News. But others might not be so lucky with such a dangerous stunt.

I tell you that news story this morning because I want you to consider how it feels to wear a blindfold. How it feels to be blind. In complete darkness. Now consider that feeling when a blindfold is removed, light switches are turned on in the darkness, windows opened without warning; it is unmistakable when that moment of glory arrives. When revealed, what one might have hoped for stands out, and even more so, when the surprise is better and bigger than one could have ever expected. For many of us, such sudden realization and revelation can be awe-

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inspiring, while also blinding us from seeing the breadth of what is there, if we aren't ready for the reveal.

“You'll know it when you see it.” I continue to say this phrase to my mother when we talk about having faith in hope in seeing my father in the Kingdom of God. Yet, this phrase still wrecks the nerves of even the most confident people. “How will I know when I've seen it?” is usually the response I get. And the response I give back is, “you'll just know.”

Worry and wonder often come to the minds of those who lack absolute confidence and trust in their faith. This is not an unusual feeling. Yet, the sudden realization of the moment of truth, or an arrival at a destination, or an unveiling of something hidden is liberating and a joy-filled sensation. Sometimes it can even be surprising and shocking to the senses if we are not prepared for what meets us there. Sometimes the moment demands focused attention, listening, watching as our senses adjust after the initial shock. Very much like a blindfold being removed and snatched away and the first thing you see is the sun.

In our gospel reading for this morning, the disciples were not ready for what this time away with Jesus would bring, as he went for prayer. They knew they had journeyed up the mountain with Jesus, but the glory that comes from following him was not on their minds. They lacked awareness and understanding of the mystery of Jesus' chosenness as God's Son and were not anticipating anything worth waiting for. They were overcome in their tiredness until, suddenly, their senses were shocked by the glory that shone so brightly. Suddenly, the familiar experience of Jesus in prayer revealed a seemingly obvious truth that they were too tired to process fully and accurately. His glory was revealed so much so that Jesus' face was changed in its appearance. Even his clothes took on the splendor of dazzling white, an unspeakable brightness of joy.

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Peter in his haste does not know what he is asking when he reacts to this encounter by offering to build a tent for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This glory is not something bound to the persons of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and thus cannot be restricted to just “dwell in houses made with hands” (see Acts 7:48-50). Jesus is the light of the world, the glory of the people of Israel. However, at this moment, we come to know of the exodus plans, the transition for Jesus’ life, in the divine conversation he has with Moses and Elijah. These are plans for the good of all God’s people and plans that will influence the lives of those who follow Jesus.

In Peter, we see how the disciples seemed to have missed something in translation, as they do not yet understand the lessons they have been taught while following Jesus in his prayer life. They were caught up in the joy of the moment, forgetting that coming down from the mountain, away from the place of this singular experience, was needed. The disciples were led into what was initially a bright and joy-filled splendor, but they were not ready. They were led to witness this manifestation of the glory of God, but Peter responded in ignorance, which turned to terror as the disciples were deprived of their natural senses when they came into the cloud and heard the startling, shocking, shaking, voice of God speak of Jesus as God’s chosen one. They learned through this experience not to depend on their own understanding, but to trust God, and look only to Jesus, who remained alone once their senses returned and the splendor of glory was no longer in plain sight.

The disciples on the mountain benefited from the freedom of distraction when the voice of God spoke. They were forced to listen, to pray. We find that the other followers down the mountain were also in need of renewed revelation as to all that Jesus offered them in prayer by the Spirit. His disciples were likely distracted, seeing in themselves this divine provision rather than completely trusting and depending on the teachings of Jesus. They could not heal the son who

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was brought to Jesus from among the crowd at the foot of the mountain, and Jesus did not mince words in his frustration.

Jesus embodies what many of us seem to forget. He shows us the importance of setting apart in prayer before coming back to see all the people informed in the fullness of God’s glory. In him, we are reminded to trust in the essential directions we have been provided: to pray, listen, and care for the holistic needs of people.

Before leaving our own mountaintop experiences with Jesus at church, in retreats, on vacations, we are faced with a sobering truth. The places, occasions, and experiences of joy are not something to hold fast to and try to make last forever within structures of our own creation. We will not always have the benefit of the focus that comes from being desensitized from the world and embraced in a cloud filled with God’s voice. Yet, we have prayer, just as Jesus had, and can rely on the inspiration and discernment of the Spirit Jesus left for us.

God has a plan for us, just as Jesus knew of the plans for his life in death and resurrection. We are called to go back to the people, to follow Jesus back down the mountain, resting on our feet in Spirit and truth.

Jesus recognized in the people both the need for what he had to offer and the lack of faithfulness that filled his followers. Even though he exclaimed his frustration to this generation of believers, he then casts out the evil spirit and heals the son. It is understandable that what he has done is by God and something his followers should be able to do. Much like Peter, the people needed to recognize the glory of God. This outreach and forming of followers and believers was his destination. Faithfulness to God and commitment to the people is foundational to what it is to be a disciple of Jesus, to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (that is the mission of The United Methodist Church).

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We are challenged to follow the directions of Jesus to this destination faithfully and to trust that how we are being led is enough. We are to trust that the destination of the coming of God’s kingdom for all of the people, whenever we reach that aim, is worth the anticipation and staying awake for. If we grow more concerned with following Christ, then we will be closer to living by faith and leading the people to do the same. By faith, we will be ready whenever God’s glory shines, no matter how sudden and no matter how brightly.

Take notice that not only the father of the healed son benefited from this much anticipated experience of seeking Jesus’ help as his destination for healing. Surely the father was worried anxious, even though he knew Jesus was the destination. Surely the crowd looked on with anticipation, even if believing Jesus could do this for the man. Even the disciples who could not do what Jesus was then able to do must have felt a knot of worry or guilt in their stomachs as they felt much the same. Yet, the wrecking of their nerves, the wonder and worry, their lack of full confidence in the power of Jesus was released in great joy as the crowd was overwhelmed by God’s great and glorious power.

Remember that just as the disciples on the mountain needed to see the glory of God revealed, so the people needed to see as well. And, just as Jesus prayerfully prepared for continued work among the people, so we disciples of Jesus must prepare ourselves, go up on our mountains in prayer, and bring the glory of the Lord to all people, in all places, by faith.

We must see all the people however we have been divinely gifted to do so. The disciples who could not heal the boy taught us that being present is not enough. Knowing of the needs of the people we encounter is not enough. We must do more than look around ourselves for God’s glory to shine in others or in some outward provision. We must be the light of the world and seek

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to spread God’s glory among the people as we meet them wherever they are and however they are in need.

The transfiguration of Jesus need not be left for the mountain-top experience. We must bring the transfiguration, the transformation, to all the people.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you God of all creation. You formed us in your image and breathed life into us. When we forget that you are God – you wait patiently for us to remember. The stars remind us that we are but a grain of sand in your hands. The sun reminds us that your Son is our Light, in him there is no darkness. With all creation and heaven’s company we sing to you with praise and glory. Amen.

Prayers of the People

In peace, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God. For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and compassion may grow among all peoples, in the world and in your church, we pray to you, most Gracious God. Have mercy, O God. For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve in ways that enhance the common good, promoting justice, dignity and freedom for all, we pray to you O God. Have mercy, O God. For a blessing upon the labors of all, and for wisdom in caring for your creation, we pray to you, most loving God. Have mercy, O God. For all who suffer and are in pain, for all who grieve, for those who are imprisoned, oppressed, or enslaved, that they may be released and freed from distress, we pray to you O Christ. Christ have mercy. For this community, that we may be awake to your word and responsive to your call, that in all we do your glory may shine, we pray to you O Christ. Christ have mercy. For those with whom we disagree, and those we do not understand. Give us the grace and humility to practice kindness and gentleness, we pray to you, O Christ. Christ have mercy. For ourselves, for the forgiveness of our sin and hardness of heart, for the strength and courage to follow Jesus more closely, we pray to you. Holy Spirit, come to us. Free us from anxiety; fill us anew with joy, peace and patience; give us health of mind, body and spirit; empower us to serve you and our neighbors in all we do, we pray to you. Holy Spirit, come to us. Holy One, come to us. Transform us into your image from one degree of glory to the next, and sustain us until that day we are united with you and all the saints, rejoicing with endless joy. May it be so, O Trinity of Love. Alleluia! Amen.

A Great Thanksgiving for Transfiguration Sunday

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

God of all times and all places, God of the infinite and infinitesimal,
in the blazing splendor of your glory
you called forth light from darkness,
day from night,
land from oceans,
and life in all its dazzling array from lifeless matter.
Among the living you made and called humankind
imprinting upon us your image,
to be bearers of your glory in the world.
Though we failed to shine, and hid your image within us,
you continued to call us into fellowship with you
and to fulfill your mission for us
through prophets, scriptures, priests,
and a people you redeemed for yourself.
And so,
with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

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Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
In him we see the fullness of your glory
revealed in human form.
Born into poverty, he fulfilled his mother's song,
that you would fill the hungry with good things,
and send the rich empty away.
Declaring the nearness of your kingdom,
he forgave sinners, cast out demons,
raised the dead, restored the blind and lame,
visited the sick, the prisoners and the needy,
and gathered disciples to continue to declare
the good news in word and deed,
transfiguring the world in the power of your Holy Spirit.

By the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection
you gave birth to your church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant
by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me."

And so,
in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,

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in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them to be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ,
one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory,
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit in your holy church,
All honor and glory is yours, almighty Father,
Now and for ever.

Amen.

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray: