

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 23, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Exodus 24: 12-18

Responsive Reading; Psalm 99

Epistle Reading; 2 Peter 1: 16-21

Gospel Reading; Matthew 17: 1-9

Sermon Title: LET THE PEOPLE TREMBLE

By Revend Jim Gardner

Summary: You ain't seen nothing yet.

This is Transfiguration Sunday. I have a confession to make. I do covet something. I covet the experience of James, Peter and John on that mountain top. They got to see God revealed in Jesus and they are the only ones in the history of the world to see that. Think about it. They had spent three years of their lives in the company of Jesus the man. They saw him teach and heal. They walked with him and talked with him. They had him explain his parables to them. They ate with him and slept with him and, excuse me for being too graphic, but they went to the rest room with him. They knew him as a man, a great man, but a man just the same.

On that historic day, they witnessed the deity of Jesus. His face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as the light. This was whiter than they had ever witnessed. Hey, back then they did not have Tide pods or Oxie Clean.

The Epistle lesson points out how important this event was to validating the Bible. Peter says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This happened chapter 17 in Matthew. In chapter 16:28, the last verse of chapter 16, Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Peter, James and John saw Jesus as he would come in the last days. Before these 3 apostles died, they got to see the Son of Man in the glory of His coming kingdom. This was not an embellishment or Myth of the Bible; this was the real thing.

In our Tuesday night Bible study, we read the Bible word for word and when a classmate says, "What does that mean?" Don will explain that some theologians say this and others say that

and he will indicate which one he tends to believe but does not rule out other interpretations.

The idea that the Bible has certain embellishments or myths should not be a deterrent from our belief in the books. These things are God directed tools to show the magnitude of God, his actions and the glory of his universe and His plan for that universe.

It is kind of like two roommates in college at spring break. One of them is working his way through and has to spend spring break resurfacing the basketball floor, while the other gets to go to Cancun or Florida.

The one that got the vacation comes back and wants to tell his buddy about a beautiful girl he saw on the beach. He might say, "I saw this absolutely beautiful girl on the beach. She was twenty-three, five foot seven, and had a drop-dead gorgeous figure. She was wearing a fuchsia chiffon string bikini, and when she moved it was so graceful that it seemed she was floating on air." OK, in reality she may not have been 23. She might not have been 5'7", and she probably was not wearing a fuchsia chiffon string bikini. More likely a pink, cotton two-piece swim suit but the picture would make it perfectly clear that the floor fixing roommate missed out on seeing a really beautiful girl. This was not a lie; this was an embellishment that showed the

truth of the fact that the floor fixing roommate missed out on seeing a beautiful sight.

How many of the stories in the Bible are made more outstanding by their wording?

The unfortunate thing is non-believers use this to discredit the Bible accounts. Peter made sure that this could not happen when he gave his first hand account that could be backed up by James and John. Peter also validated that passage in chapter 16 verse 28 that I never could understand until I did the research for this message.

Now I would like to change course a little bit. I like to show how the Bible can help us change and by our changing we can change a little piece of our world.

We may never be able to see the transfiguration of Christ but maybe we can see the transfiguration of ourselves and others.

We will never be able to be transfigured to deity but we can be transfigured from sinners into being instruments for Jesus Christ in our little piece of our world.

Last Friday I was working my shift at the Crossroads House, which is an end of life care home. Twenty minutes before my shift was about to end, I went into talk to our resident named Marilyn, and yes, she did give me permission to use her name in this message. She asked me what time it was because she

had just awakened from a nap. I told her and then she asked me to sit on the bed because she wanted to talk with me. She told me that she was the happiest that she had ever been. She was ready to die and go to heaven and everything that mattered to her was falling into place.

She has terminal cancer and less than three months to live. She beat cancer five times and now that she is 85, she told the Lord that she could not face that fight again. In all reality it is a battle that would only slightly prolong her life at best.

Marilyn said that her family had drifted apart in location as well as result of some misunderstandings. Now they were all getting back together to be part of her last days. She has been able to interact with her grandchildren more than ever before and so many friends are showing support that we have to limit their visit time to keep from totally exhausting her.

Sometimes Marilyn asks me to pray with her and following my prayer she prays for me and my ministry in the most beautiful prayers I have ever had prayed for me specifically in my life. Oh yes that includes the prayers that were said when I was ordained a deacon, an elder and as a minister.

As we talked, she voiced a concern. She wondered if she should feel guilty because she was more anxious to go to Heaven to see her grandmother, her mother, her husband and her son then she was to see Jesus. I assured her that when it came to

loving friends and family that Jesus does not have a jealous bone in his body. Marilyn is legally blind but sees Jesus more clearly than anyone that I know. I have had the privilege to see her transfigured from a nice elderly lady to an agent of Christ. She has given sight to all of us that have had the privilege to interact with her. Marilyn portrays me as an agent for Christ and shows by example that we can all be the hands and feet of Christ if we will but believe in him and see ourselves to selflessly reflect his brilliant radiance.

I firmly believe that we can do this in our lives and so, tremble with joy and gratitude that our Lord would believe in us as we believe in him. We ain't seen nothing yet.

Hallelujah and Amen!

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