

Come to the mountain! – February 27, 2022, Monika Bereczki-Farkas

Reading: Luke 9:28-37

Last Thursday, when we heard about the war in Ukraine, many people started to pray together for peace in Ukraine, and also for peace in the world. It was a wonderful and scary feeling all in one. It was good to hear how different people can come together and agree on praying for their fellow Ukrainians, and it was scary because all the prayers came because of the war. And somehow, deep inside, I felt something strange, that it was good to pray together for the end of war, but we knew what happened a short time ago in Ottawa and different parts of Canada, and we saw how our nation was divided on different issues. What I want to say is it's always easier to come together and pray for those who are far away working for peace rather than those closer to where we live. And I am saying this as somebody from a neighbouring country of Ukraine, who went to school with many Ukrainians. Why? Because the theological university I attended was the closest one to the Ukrainian border and there was no reformed theological college in that part of Ukraine. And those friends of mine are ministers there, right now. I am not sure how brave they are but they are there to encourage their people to still believe in God. And somehow I don't feel right only praying for them. I think we could do more good if we start to work for peace among us. Let there be peace and start with me.

How should we do this? Learn from Jesus. In today's story, Jesus went up onto a mountain to pray. He needed that time with the Father, and from the readings, we know that when he prayed the transfiguration happened and Moses and Elijah appeared there and they spoke about the upcoming things in Jerusalem. Three of the disciples went with Jesus, Peter, John and James and they witnessed how Jesus changed, how his face changed and his clothes became bright. A wonderful experience, but to experience that they had to climb up the mountain and not because of the view, but because Jesus wanted to pray.

This is an important step we have to take notice of today. It is not enough to climb up onto the mountain, we also have to know why we are doing that. It's not enough to come to church, we have to be with God. There is power in prayer. Because look at what happened to Jesus when he prayed. All those changes, then the voice from heaven: This is my son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.

We call what happened on the mountain transfiguration. This is our last Sunday before the season of Lent. Next week we will start a new worship series. Lent is a journey toward Easter, but before that, there is the cross. And Lent helps us to know more about the journey toward the cross. There are people who fast during Lent and try to have more time for God. Somehow that journey leads us down. Like going down from a mountain to the valley. As we can see it in today's Bible story. The disciples wanted to stay up on the mountain because they felt that it was so good for them to be there, but they had to go down. They had to go back where people were waiting for Jesus to teach and heal them. They couldn't stay up on the top.

This Sunday is like being on the top. Before we start the Lenten season, we have to know who is coming with us. We need the experience with Jesus, we need to be those who are chosen to see who he

is and hear the voice from heaven: **“This is my son”** like Peter, John and James did. Of course, they wanted to stay there and to put up three tents to live in because this was one of the best moments in their lives. Just imagine if you were there with Jesus and saw Him glorified, I think you would say the same:

“Master, it is good for us to be here”.

It is good for us to be where You are, Jesus. It is good for us to be with you and we wish to be with you every day, not only on Sundays, that is why we want to build a house for you. Like, Kirkwall, we want to meet with you here.

Have you ever had this kind of experience, that you knew God was with you and you didn't want to move forward, you just wanted to freeze that moment and live in it? Especially when going back into the world means facing reality as we can read in **Matthew 24: 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

It's better for us to stay with Jesus than to hear about the news in the world.

And that's why we need these Sundays, like Transfiguration Sunday. We need to fill up our tank before we go from here. Lately, I noticed that it was hard for me to prepare for the message. All the events in the world, then my high-risk pregnancy meant that I had started to use up my reserves. Maybe it happened to you as well. The last two years were not easy and if you used up your energy and hope I can imagine how tired your soul is. As our bodies are starving without food, our souls are doing the same. Our souls also need food, special spiritual food from God. Especially before Lent. We need to fill our tank up before Lent begins. We need to know who our Lord is, who will be with us when we come down from the hill. Because this is the end of today's story, you cannot remain on the mountain with Jesus. Those disciples wanted to stay there and I noticed that the end of the story is usually considered to be verse 36 when they heard the voice from heaven say: “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him,” then they found Jesus alone. But this is not the end of the story. The end of the story is when they had to come down from the mountain. This is the hardest part of the story because this is our story too. We cannot stay on the mountain, where everything is so good, so peaceful, where we can see and feel God. We have to go back to our daily lives. But you will always remember that God was with you on the mountain.

So today, come! Come to the mountain and feel the presence of God, who is with you, who wants you to take a rest here and to gain strength because you have to go back to the place you came from. You cannot stay here forever and you need strength for your daily life. God knows this and that is why this is the message today. Jesus also knew that He had to be with God to have enough strength for his journey toward the cross. And this is our journey too.

If you are here today on your tired legs, or in your sick body or with your worries and fear; let the glory of God shine on you and you will get enough strength for your journey. On the mountain after the transfiguration the disciples didn't see others, they saw only Jesus. Because at the end you will see only Jesus and He is enough for everything. He didn't remain on the mountain, He came down from the mountain with his disciples. We are not alone. Amen.