

“LOVE ANYWAY”
“On Coming Down the Mountain”

February is the month for “love” not only in the hallmark retail world, but also within the UMC resist harm movement. After the focus on sacred resistance, the focus on love might seem a bit sentimental or light weight. It is neither. Love truly is the most powerful force in heaven and on earth. We underestimate what can happen when we love God and love each other. Love changes lives, changes hearts, transforms individuals and communities. To live out the greatest commandment to Love is one of the hardest things we ever attempt in our lives. Last week we celebrated Valentine’s Day which can be a fairly shallow expression of love. After the scriptures on being blessed, being salt and light and the challenge to live out the law of love, today is a “transition” Sunday if you will. In the liturgical calendar it is Transfiguration Sunday which is the last Sunday in Epiphany and on Wednesday Lent begins. Instead of a Study Guide next week there are Lenten devotional books available for everyone and we have created a Lenten calendar with both a Lenten photo a day challenge with hashtags to share on social media and a daily calendar with a variety of prayer actions we can participate in together. The season of Lent is a gift of intentional time for us to walk with Jesus all the way to the cross. Please come and worship with us and pray with us as we prepare our hearts for Easter. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“On Coming Down the Mountain”**

Prayer of the Week:

O God, we open our eyes and we see Jesus, the months of ministry transfigured to a beam of light, the light of the world, your light. May your light shine upon us. We open our eyes and we see Moses and Elijah, your word restoring us, showing us the way, telling a story, your story, his story, our story. May your word speak to us. We open our eyes and we see Jesus, not casting us off, but leading us down, leading us out - to ministry, to people. Your love endures forever. We open our ears and we hear your voice, ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to him!’ And we give you thanks. Amen (adapted from a prayer by William Loader, 2/2001)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, February 24, 2020 Matthew 17: 1-4

This is Matthew's version of the Transfiguration. For those early believers who were from the Jewish tradition, this story took them back to Moses. Moses went up the mountain and glowed with the presence of God. Jesus goes up the mountain and not only does he glow, Moses and Elijah suddenly seem to appear as well and were conversing with Jesus. There on the mountaintop, the presence of God with Jesus was affirmed by Moses and by Elijah. They are awed and afraid, uncertain of how respond to this experience of Jesus. *As we come to the end of our focus on Love, in what way does this story of Jesus help you love him more? Have you had this kind of experience and how did you respond?*

Tuesday, February 25, 2020 Matthew 17: 1-6

So much has happened in the lives of the disciples. They have seen Jesus heal, teach, perform miracles, speak in ways that was inspiring and confusing. They had been sent out, and they came back with great energy and passion. They had seen Jesus reach out to the Gentiles. Who knows what they expected when they went up to the mountain top? Maybe they thought they would sleep, rest and enjoy the quiet away from the crowds. What happened was an experience like no other. JESUS transformed/transfigured in front of them. It was simply amazing, and they were stunned. Of course, they want to stay! Why go back? With the voice of God ringing in their ears they are overwhelmed and frightened. The call is to listen to Christ and follow. *What is Christ saying to you today? How will you follow?*

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 Psalm 51: 1-4

Today is Ash Wednesday, the first of the forty days of Lent. The Psalm passage is one of traditional readings for Ash Wednesday and reminds us of the solemnity of Lent. Traditionally, today is a fast day, when believers refrained from food in order to focus on their relationship with God. Lent is an invitation to evaluate our relationship with God, to grow closer to Christ and deeper in our faith. This confession of David is about his being convicted by his sin and his need for grace. *What are your intentions this Lent? How will you open yourself to Christ during these 40 days? Today at noon, there will be an Ash Wednesday service in our Chapel. Tonight, worship begins at 7:00 in our sanctuary. Please come and begin the Lenten journey with your brothers and sisters.*

Thursday, February 27, 2020 Matthew 17: 5-9

Suddenly in the midst of the light there are clouds and a voice honoring Jesus and telling the disciples to pay attention and "listen" to the beloved Son of God. Then it's all over and they started down the mountain and Jesus told them not to tell anyone. What? They were told not to tell anyone? Can you imagine what the disciples thought of that? Perhaps Jesus understood that those kind of experiences of God need to rest in the heart and soul of a person. One can tell others about the experience, but the telling often lacks the power of what had happened. These mountain top experiences allow us to pause and ponder. The real test of the experience is how a person lives afterwards. *How are you called to come back down the mountain and live out love in your everyday life?*

Friday, February 28, 2020 2 Peter 1: 16-19

In this letter the author encourages those receiving his words to pay attention. The author reminds the readers of the Transfiguration where Jesus is identified as God's beloved Son and then asks them to "pay attention to it, just as you would to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." As we enter the season of Lent and go "into the darkness" may the Light guide us through those dark places until Easter dawns.