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Worship
February 14, 2021

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/Uct8qX94ICK-omDHSc71en4w/featured>

GATHERING

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

OPENING HYMN – “Christ in Me Arise”

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God, and worship the Christ.

***Once we were separated from him, aliens and strangers who did not belong,
without hope and without God in the world.***

Once we loved darkness rather than light. Once we could not sing the Lord’s song.

But now we are joined with Christ, brought near through his blood, for He is our peace.

Now we who lived in darkness have come into the light have been given a new song.

Let us come and worship the Living Light of Christ!

A BRIEF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins, trusting in the abundant grace of Christ.

A moment of silence

***You are acquainted with all our ways. We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin: our
own sins and the broken systems that bind us.***

We turn inward, failing to follow your outward way of love.

***We distrust those who are not like us. We exploit the earth and its resources and fail to
consider the generations to come.***

Forgive us, gracious God, for all we have done and left undone.

***Yet we are forgiven by our God through the Risen Christ, and we are called to be the
beloved community living out Christ’s justice and the Spirit’s reconciling peace. Amen***

HYMN OF PRAISE – “Thy Word”

GREETING

The Lord be with you

Be filled with the spirit of God today.

We worship to open our hearts for God’s blessings.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading

2 Kings 2:1-12

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent.'

Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know; be silent.'

Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' He responded, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.' As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Second Reading

Psalm 50

A Psalm of Asaph.

***The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.***

*Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.
He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
'Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!'
The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge.
Selah*

PSALM RESPONSE - "To the Upright"

GOSPEL READING

Mark 9:2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

SERMON

Transfiguration Sunday, Feb. 14, 2021. "Lights, Clouds, and Voices." Bethany

It had been a tough week for Jesus and the disciples. You all know those kinds of weeks. You know the pattern. Things had been going so very well for a long time. For Jesus and the disciples that meant that people were healed and the crowds listening to Jesus had been large and growing, and even the disciples had been getting along for a change. Then Jesus had to ask THAT question: Who do people say that I am? The disciples did have an idea who Jesus was, but it was Peter who spoke up. You are the Messiah! And then Jesus started to talk about crosses and death and suffering—well the disciples didn't want to hear about that, and Peter spoke up again saying, no this can't happen! The Jesus told Peter that he was really speaking for Satan and not for God, and nothing seemed to be the same after that. The tension was so thick you could almost cut it with a knife. The whole following week was just plain uncomfortable. They were all waiting for the other shoe to drop. I think we all have had weeks like that.

Then Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to come with him up the mountain—hard to imagine what was going through the minds of those three as they went up the mountain with Jesus. They were more than a little fearful after Jesus told them about dying in Jerusalem. What did he mean by that. And suffering—was that where this journey would end? With death and suffering? Even with all the miracles, the crowds, the healings, was all of that going to be meaningless? Thank God they were going to be in prayer, then perhaps they could get their minds sorted out before heading to Jerusalem.

I believe that the disciples were afraid that night; afraid, just as we are afraid at times. Afraid that their faith wasn't going to be strong enough; afraid that the world's temptations would be too strong for them, just as we are afraid that the world's temptations are sometimes too strong for us. Afraid of this world in which power and wealth seem to control the lives of countless people, including us. Afraid of a world that appears to worship violence and power rather than the light of Christ. Afraid of this world in which senseless evens take place every day. Indeed, do we not ask, as have the disciples and so many in the Church before us, where is God in the midst of this mess? What good does it do to have a Messiah who suffer and die? But up the mountain they went with Jesus, just as we would have, had we been there.

As they reached the top, something began to happen. The mist began to gather into clouds—and then the light came—and then this voice came—and then Moses and Elijah (and we had no idea how we knew who they were)—and then Jesus—well Jesus was changed up there! Jesus was transfigured up there! HE shined! It was amazing; awesome; frightening! And the Voice—that Voice. The very ground shook the very ground on which we were standing! This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him!" what does one say when faced with the living God? What does one say when confronted with the holy? It is a confrontation that changes one forever.

It was an experience that was full of the presence of God and full of fear, for all things had now changed forever! In that moment; in that presence of God, the disciples fell to the ground in fear and adoration. God in all of his glory was there, and then it happened. As Peter began to speak, the cloud, the voice, Moses and Elijah, the light: all were gone and then Jesus came and touched them and told them not to be afraid. Don't be afraid—these words of Jesus are echoed throughout the Scriptures whenever humanity encounters the living God. From Exodus to Revelations, these words are the same: DON'T BE AFRAID! And why should we be afraid when we know that Jesus is there with us! Are there not times when you and I hear that still, quiet voice of Jesus telling us, as he once told the disciples: "Do not be afraid, I will give you hope that rises above despair; do not be afraid, for I will strengthen your faith to rise above doubt; do not be afraid, for life will conquer death; do not be afraid for I love you with a love that will never let you go, even to the end of the age!" Do Not Be Afraid! Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY - "Transfigure Us, O Lord"

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe that God is Spirit, and we worship Him and must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

We believe that God is Light, and that if we walk in the light, we then have fellowship not only with one another, but with our Lord as well.

We believe that God is Love, and that everyone who loves is born of God and know God.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life and that whoever believes on Him, will abide forever.

(from the Book of Common Worship by Wilbur P Thirkield)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

As we are guided by the Spirit, let us offer our prayers for the church, for the nation, for all in need, and for our world.

A brief silence

Pastor: Gracious God, in this time of worry, fear, division, uncertainty, we pray that you will bring insight, compassion, understanding, and strength of character to our leaders of communities, churches, states, and nation that calm and direction will be restored to our people. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Reader: Gracious God, we pray that we shall use wisely all the gifts of our world: the water that provides life to us all; the land that provides our food; for you call us to be good stewards of all that you have made, and we ask that you let it be so. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor: Lord, we pray for the safety of all who protect us: police officers and firefighters, military personnel, peacekeepers, and for the leaders of governments. We pray that all act with justice and understanding to all whom they encounter. And Lord, we pray for the time when peace will come, and violence will be no more. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for our world, nation, and community in the midst of this Covid-19 pandemic. We know that health care workers are having to make difficult decisions of life and death. Give them wisdom in those decisions. Give strength that they may give care to those suffering with Covid and other diseases, and we ask that you would protect them from illness and despair. We also pray for all who are ill here at Bethany and we ask for hand of wholeness and healing; comfort and strength for all who are ill of body, mind, or spirit. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor: Listen to each of us Lord, as we come to you in this moment of silent prayer. It is into Your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Listen to each of us, Lord, as we come to you in a moment of silent prayer

Into your hands, great and compassionate God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING *(Please mail your weekly offering to the church - 4300 N 82nd St. Scottsdale, AZ 85251)*

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God of all blessings, giver of all good gifts; day by day you shower us with what we need to live and prosper. With glad and generous hearts and in a response to thanksgiving, we return a portion of our wealth. May what we give be a symbol of our gratitude and a blessing of your love for those who may be helped through our offering. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with every good blessing. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN - *"Shine, Jesus, Shine"*

DISMISSAL

Go in Peace...to live and serve in the way of the cross. Thanks be to God.