

Glowing With God
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So what brings us all here, to this place, right now?

It's to be with each other, right? To feel that connection in our lives.

To give love to each other, and share each other

in the safety and warmth of God's Spirit.

And that's a wonderful and beautiful thing.

That's why I love the church. Especially this one.

There's another reason too, why we come to sit in this space.

Even bigger than that other beautiful thing.

And that is to feel God. ...Right?

To come to a place where you open your soul and your mind

to the company of God all around You...

And be thankful for it.

... We come to church to have that one moment in the week

when we can look back at God, and smile.

...The church is meant to be a safe place. A sanctuary.

One of those rooms you walk into to get away from all of that mess out there,

and find some peace with God.

So let's do that, for a minute.

I know we're in the sermon,
but let's set aside a moment, to feel God in the quiet.

To feel God between each other.

And let that peace come in.

Let yourself feel God, here.

[pause for silent prayer]

Wish we could do that through all minutes of the day. Would be nice, huh?

As humans--- as people, we're so blessed to have this ability to sense God.

To have evolved into a creature with the ability to think about God,

and reach out to God, and talk to God.

It's impossible to know how other species feel God.

If they even notice.

But I'm just glad we have the chance, the way we do.

And the most amazing part is, we have the chance to do it at any time.

Doesn't need to be in here. Doesn't need to be words before a meal.

You can be in the middle of watching a movie.

You can be in the middle of a conversation with a friend.

You can be cooking dinner, or typing out an e-mail...

... and RIGHT THERE. All around you is the presence of God. The soul of God.

Ready to hear you. Ready to be felt, and experienced.

And you, see, we need that time with God. ---Those mountaintop moments with God.

Because Lord knows our lives can become such a pile sometimes.

But God stills all things. The peace of God overwhelms all of the clutter.

And always, always, always, the magnificence of the holy peace of God

has the power to consume us and clear away all of those things from our soul.

In our lives, we seek out mountaintop experiences of God.

And when I say that, I just mean those moments when we reach up high

and feel God reach deep into us, no matter where we stand.

Sometimes those mountaintop moments actually do take place on the top of a mountain.

I've had that experience myself, thankfully, more than a few times.

Sometimes it can happen here, at church, at random, unexpected moments.

And sometimes it happens when we're just sitting alone in our house.

But always... when it does happen. Something overtakes us.

Something *changes* in us, and comes over us that we didn't feel, before.

Our readings from both the Hebrew Bible and gospel of Luke, today,

talks about those moments

For both Jesus, and Moses. Those changing moments.

From Exodus 34:

²⁹Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him.

And from the gospel of Luke:

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

In both of these, Jesus and Moses experience

a deeply intimate moment with God.

A profound communication with God.

A connection into the heart of their souls---sharing themselves with the soul of God---

That changes them. Transforms them.

That makes them actually *glow* with the presence of God, in the sight of others.

Have you ever felt that in your own life?

Have you opened yourself up to an experience of God? A deep one?

Really opened yourself to sit for a long time in that at-first uncomfortable silence.

Letting all of those thoughts about your grocery list,

and past conversations, and future worries eventually slip away,

Until it's just you and God... and you sit there, in that space, without a word,

letting God soul fill yours, in the quiet?

In those moments, how did you feel?

What happened to that sense of space up here

That sense of space in here

It changes, doesn't it?

It's hard to describe, but something lightens and heavies in both of those places at once.

It's like a flood of rushing water coming and sweeping all other things away,

then steadying out into a still balance.

At least that's the way it feels for me.

I've felt that transformation before, and I hope you've been blessed to feel it too...

And even going into this whole witnessable transformation, too...

... Once when I was in high school...

...I'll never forget the moment.

You know how some of those minutes and words just stick with you.

They stay in your head, and you can go back to them like they just passed,

no matter how long ago it was.

(for better and for worse, right?)

Well, thankfully this was one of the good ones.

I remember something frustrating happened during the day, while I was in class.

And later moving around the halls, dressed badly (most likely) and talking awkwardly,

I decided that I needed to step away from all of the *stuff*, for a little while ago.

[Younger ones, close your ears! Don't do this. I got in a lot of trouble.]

So I went into the bathroom, locked the stall, hung my backpack up on the hook,
and lifted my feet onto the toilet seat.

In that space, I opened myself to a sense of God. I fell into silent prayer.

---That quiet, dark place behind your eyelids,

where you don't say a thing to God, knowing God already knows,

And you just let yourself feel that presence here and in here .

For as long as you can handle it.

And that day—wow, I was able to handle it for a while.

Nearly skipped all of that next class to be with God.

Would've been a great excuse to give the teacher,

if I'd been willing to pull God into the middle of it, huh?

("I skipped class to be with God.")

“---Yeah sure, kid. Detention for being late *and* sacrilegious.”)

Anyway... In that bathroom stall, I had one of those profoundly deep experiences of God.

One of those soul-cleansing, wash-away,

and steady-back-into-balance moments with God's soul.

...And when I finally walked into that next class,

(after apologizing to the teacher), I remember seeing my best friend,

Andria standing and waiting for me in the group.

She looked at me and she said---“What's wrong with you?”

I had no idea what she meant.

“...You look weird.” She said.

“Gee, thanks, friend.” She’s always been pretty blunt.

I asked her why. I hadn’t looked in the mirror,
but assumed my bad hair still looked like my normal bad hair...

“Your eyes are glowing.” She said to me.

And I remember she looked long and hard at me as she said it.

---The look on her own face, was completely sincere.

In fact, she almost looked concerned!

...The tone in her voice, almost accusatory--- Suspicious!

And I think that’s why I remember the moment, still.

She asked me what I’d been doing, and I told her.

If it was someone else, maybe at that age, I would’ve been more shy about it;

But she was my best friend, and I told her that I’d been praying.

And strangely enough, that fact didn’t creep her out,

but in that space with her being so strangely startled,

It actually made her interested in trying it herself, later.

She asked me about it---*days* after.

...Said she didn’t know how to do it, but wanted to try.

So... in our life with God, here in the world, as we are now.

We have two levels of experience with God, right?

From this memory---which comes back to me each time I read what our lectionary

spread out for us this Sunday---

---and from those biblical stories, themselves...

...two things happen:

We feel God at the top of that mountain,

and then we come back from that place.

Continuing on with our readings:

Picking back up in Exodus 34:

³¹But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. ³²Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

And moving forward in the gospel of Luke, following the transfiguration----

---that three part change the disciples saw in Jesus on the mountain:

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child.

As God's people, we're called up that mountain to touch into the soul of God,

but we're also called back down.

Whether that mountaintop experience comes here at church,

Or at home, in the quiet...

Unfortunately we can't stay there for the rest of the rest.

At least not the way we are, now, right?

We're called to know God. To feel God. To reach out for God.

But just like Moses and Jesus, we're called to come back to this life.

Back to ourselves.

Back to the people living these days with us---

---in the case of that moment I felt--- to come back out of the bathroom!

And go back to class----

And share what we felt. Share what we learned, in the best ways we can.

Moses did this by describing what was passed between himself and God to the congregation of the Israelites.

Jesus did, it as usual, through healing actions in the world.

But what we do at the bottom of the mountain, takes so many forms for each of us.

Sometimes it's through words. Preaching, Talking teaching.

Sometimes it's through silence.

--Holding back from saying something you know will be damaging or hurtful to others.

Sometimes its through action---doing something you know is right, regardless of the risk.

And sometimes its through holding back from acting.

---Stopping yourself from moving in the world in a way that breaks down, rather than builds up.

But in all of these ways, we're called to return to our community---

--God's community---

---and do the work of the Lord by giving all of the love we've got.

And by helping others walk up that mountain too.

For as far as they're willing to go,

So that they can also feel God up here, and in here,
And feel all of that stuff wash away, and settle back into balance.

For themselves.

For God.

And for others.

So on this transfiguration Sunday, let's open ourselves up to God,
and to what's inside here .

Let's make a space for that change within us, that creates a change out here, too...

... a change---that glow of God---

---that can move the life around us in amazing ways,

And bring us all closer to the heart of God, one by one,

By sharing that love of God we've been so blessed to feel inside ourselves,

with the all of this life around us, while we walk together up and down the mountain.
Amen.