

What Makes You Glow? Who Sees You Glow?

Friends, old and new - each of us sourced by the fathomless Love that is God - we arrive together to a moment of reflection on this Transfiguration Sunday and final Sunday in the season of Epiphany. During this season in the church year, we have meditated on the Christ light that Jesus embodied so fully, and we have wondered how we might more effectively follow his lead, embodying that same light through our living. As we face into a new week, I invite us to wonder together, **what makes you glow? Who sees you glow?** I hope these questions will lead each of us into deeper alignment as we face into the challenges and opportunities of this day and the coming week. Please pray with me.

Creating, revealing, and sustaining God; we long to be more fully open to your presence and your intention for our lives. In the face of the current devastating invasion of Ukraine; our stomachs churn, our hearts ache, and our brains spin as we recognize our connectedness to the suffering and wonder what we will do about it. And God, you know the stomach-churning, heart-aching, brain-spinning suffering with which we are acquainted closer to home. In all spaces, God, your love is the source of resilience and courageous action. Come and speak the truth of your strong love into our very beings. Strengthen our receptivity to your companionship and to your deep wisdom. O God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Fellow sojourners, in what circumstances have you heard this exclamation? 'Wow, look – they are positively glowing!' When in your life have you received this affirmation? 'You look radiant today – you're really glowing!' A glow or radiance is often noted in moments of joy, pride, a new beginning, a return to good health or life balance. In short, glowing or radiance often aligns with embodying healthy, positive energy. **I wonder, have you been holding your awareness open enough in recent times to notice and affirm the glow of another? Has anyone witnessed you glowing recently?**

Let's take look at the narratives of Moses and Jesus glowing – radiating healthy, positive energy – in our scripture readings for today.

Moses practiced a pattern of stepping away from the intensity of his daily interactions with the group of people who were following his lead as they made the strenuous journey of migrating from Egypt to Canaan. He would regularly pause and physically remove himself from the fray to seek God's voice in solitude. We heard Mary Ann read this description of how Moses appeared to the people upon returning to them. We heard,

“As Moses came down from Mount Sinai carrying the two tablets of the Covenant, he was not aware that the skin on his face was radiant from speaking with God... When he finished speaking to them, Moses put a veil over his face. Whenever Moses entered the presence of God, he would remove the veil until he came out again, and when he would come out and tell the Israelites what had been commanded, they would see that the skin on his face was radiant.”

Moses's spiritual discipline was one of regularly returning to his source – the wise, strong love of God – to empower him to lead in wise, strong, and loving ways. Moses is remembered as a trusted leader (not perfect but trusted) – leadership was a key purpose in his life. He knew that he needed times of solitude with God's Holy Spirit in order to radiate healthy, positive energy in his calling as a leader.

I invite you to look at the image on the cover of our worship bulletin for today – for this Transfiguration Sunday. At the center of the Venn diagram glows red hot purpose. Purpose is found at the intersections of passion, mission, vocation, and profession.

- ‘What you love’ can fuel your experience of passion and mission.
- ‘What the world needs’ can fuel your experience of mission and vocation.
- ‘What you are paid for’ can fuel your experience of vocation and profession.
- ‘What you are great at’ can fuel your experience of profession and passion.

I wonder how Moses understood his purpose as a key leader among his people. We may recall from the narrative of his encounter with God in a burning bush that he balked at the idea that he could lead his people.

But the way in which Moses continued to seek the face of God to empower and inform his leadership certainly demonstrates dedication to the responsibilities he had shouldered. I wonder, did Moses feel enough alignment to experience bright red energy as he pursued his purpose? I imagine the red color at the center of this diagram aligns with the way the people witnessed Moses radiating upon return from time spent in solitude with God.

I wonder, what hue is your center today – what color is your current experience of purpose? Are you feeling the pale pink of low energy, the deep scarlet of emergence, the radiance of bright red, or something else?

I also wonder, what is effectively fueling your sense of purpose at this time – what you love, what the world or someone in your life needs, an endeavor for which you are paid or compensated or appreciated, something at which you excel?

I hope that you will take this image with you today and refer to it from time to time. You may wish to cut it out and tape it to a mirror, a refrigerator, a calendar – some place where you will regularly encounter it. This image sits in my office windowsill. My great hope for each of you is that you will seek the fuel you need so that your experience of purpose will be more bright than pale. We don't need all fuel sources to be extraordinary in all aspects of this diagram, but we do need sufficient alignment of the demands on our energy and with our capacity to engage with those demands.

Let's turn to the gospel reading for today. Much like his ancestor in faith and leadership, Jesus practiced a discipline of stepping away from the fray of many demands on his energy, finding renewal as he encountered God's Holy Spirit in solitude. In the narrative for today, he took his three closest friends along with him.

So, before we hear it again, I wonder, in whose presence do you feel true companionship that supports you in finding renewal? I encourage you to indulge in that one's presence more frequently. And by any means effective, I encourage you to name and thank them directly for being your companion.

We heard, "Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up onto a mountain to pray. While Jesus was praying, his face changed in appearance and the clothes he wore became dazzling white... Peter and the others had already fallen into a deep sleep, but awakening, they saw Jesus' glory... Then from the cloud came a voice which said, 'This is my Own, my Chosen One. Listen to him!'"

Jesus dazzled in the presence of the affirming Love of God. He knew in his bones that the three peoples surrounding him loved and trusted him more than they had ever imagined they could love and trust. In that brief moment, he felt the Love of God telling him he could face into anything this world threw at him. Indeed, the Love of God gave him all the courage he needed to face the unthinkable. May one of our deepest prayers today be that President Zelenskyy and every one of his Ukrainian neighbors know how beloved they are as they fight back the death-dealing monsters of ego, hatred, and violence.

This week, we will enter the Lenten journey together on Ash Wednesday. Throughout the season of Lent, we will draw on concepts from this book by Wayne Muller entitled *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*. Muller draws on the work of many teachers from various religious and spiritual paths. I would like to share with you a quote from Thomas Merton that anchors much of the content of Muller's book. Merton once wrote,

"There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence... [and that is] activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.

To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence.

The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

Those are words from Thomas Merton. I hope that you will join us as Walt Richey and I co-facilitate topical discussion about Sabbath each Wednesday evening in Lent and as our People’s Book Club discusses the book toward the end of Lent. We just may be able to strengthen ourselves spiritually (as did Moses and Jesus before us) to confront violence in all its forms – personal and systemic, near and far away.

I leave you with these words from Muller and encourage you to close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so to be able to take in these words of encouragement. Muller wrote,

“Make your home in me, [Jesus] said, as I make mine in you. The [kin-]dom is within you, he reminded them, alive and miraculous in this very moment. I am with you always: When you come to rest, you will feel me. You will remember who you are, that you are the light of the world... Our work is fruitful only when we are quiet enough to hear the miraculous resilience and strength present among those who suffer, patient enough to see the light that shines in the midst of darkness.”

Friends, let us each find ways to seek God’s face through our own Sabbath practices. And let us each shine forth in our own particular purposeful ways of radiating the Love of God because Love is counting on us. Amen.

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Exodus 34: 29-35, Luke 9: 28b-36