

Coming Into Our Own

Friends and neighbors, the gospel story on this Transfiguration Sunday invites us to wonder what a glowing Jesus and his awestruck disciples have to do with our lives today. As I pondered this beloved story along with our contemporary reading for today – May Sarton’s poem, “Now I Become Myself,” I was drawn to words from 20th century Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung, who developed the field of analytical or Jungian psychology as well as the concepts of introversion and extroversion. Jung offers wisdom alongside the Matthean gospel storyteller and May Sarton’s poetry. Jung once wrote this about coming into our own: *"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes."*

I invite you to join your spirits with mine in a moment of prayer, closing your eyes if that helps open your awareness to our affirming God’s steady presence. Holy Loving Spirit, we feel your presence as we settle into this hour of worship. We are grateful for freedom to gather – on the live stream and on this land loved by First Nations and others across time and where we are now weaving our way of community. Be powerfully with us as we welcome story, poetry, and each other’s company to wash over us. Help us to look inside to more clearly see ourselves as your Beloveds with whom you are well pleased. Awaken us to your loving presence within and among us. We pray this as students of our great teacher, Jesus. Amen.

Each year, we mark this final Sunday in the season of Epiphany as Transfiguration Sunday. This day invites us to linger just a moment longer with the meaning of Christmas. Hear me when I say it surprises me to hear those words coming out of my own lips. I am typically a Christmas-tree-up-from-AFTER-Thanksgiving-until-JUST-a-short-way-into-January type of person. But this year, our balsam fir is STILL in place in our living room, offering joyful beauty every evening.

I have not yet decided if we will take it down as we enter the season of Lent this coming Wednesday or if we will let it keep on glowing.

How are Christmas and the Epiphany season that follows it about glowing? At Christmas, we remember how Jesus arrived to his family, his neighborhood, and the world with a clear sense of Emmanuel – God with us – in all times and spaces along our human journey. Throughout the season of Epiphany, we have celebrated how Jesus illuminated the truth of God’s love and justice through his bold ministry of teaching as he brought into conversation the Hebrew scriptures and the circumstances of his neighbors’ lives. Today is the culmination of the season of recognizing light in the midst of both the concrete darkness of winter and the proverbial darkness of grief, trouble, chaos and suffering.

As I sat with this perennial jaw-dropping, head-scratching story of Jesus’ transfiguration in this Epiphany season of 2026, I asked myself what mattered most to me about the story this year. Two things stood out:

- 1) Jesus’ and his disciples’ experience of his glowing affirmation from the voice of God, and
- 2) The fact that they needed to move forward from that moment, carrying the glowing affirmation with them.

The movements of this gospel story brought to mind the phrase “coming into their own.” Many definitions can be found for “coming into one’s own.” It tends to mean being fully effective, fruitful, vibrant. And we may have heard a comment such as ‘that person is really glowing’ when they’ve come into their own. We come into our own with integrity when our way of being and our impact is affirmed by both our neighbor and within ourselves. Coming into our own happens when we know with our whole being that I and you matter, that I and you have intrinsic value, that I and you will have impact as we come into our own.

So as we travel into Lent, we will watch for how Jesus and his disciples modeled for us ways of holding awareness of the beautiful, glowing power that could emanate from an inner knowing they were beloved – even as they would face challenging opponents to their message of God’s love and justice for and shared through all people. They responded with their lives to Carl Jung’s invitation when he wrote, *“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”*

I wonder this morning: Do you have experiences you would describe as times of coming into your own? Are we as St. Croix United Church, in these first three years of our life as a new church, having experiences we would describe as times of coming into our own? And, my goodness, who have you witnessed (whether in private or public spaces) in these troubling times coming into their own?

I would invite us for a few moments to share. We heard some examples at Vigil last evening as well. Times of glowing, times of coming into one’s own. I’m going to grab a microphone through which you may wish to share an example. It really matters – affirmations shared on this joyful and painful holiday weekend for many, in this time that we’re living together – of how are we coming into our own, because we’ll need it in the times ahead. Would anyone care to share – how they’ve come into your own recently, how you feel our church is coming into our own, or something you’re witnessing in our public square of coming into their own (that might encourage others)?

“This is not about me but about a baby – a baby who learns to walk and starts to explore the outer environment.”

Other examples of glowing that you want to keep remembering as we move into Lent, as we move into coming weeks and months in our state?

“I’m here visiting for a first time with my spouse, whose chasing around our toddler. And not too surprising - going from our lives (I’ve done things and explored the world and been everywhere), and having our first child is something I didn’t expect would be so rewarding and challenging. And it’s amazing having him every single day – even if he’s a crazy little toddler. We love him.”

He glows and then, see, the glowing is meant to be shared. That’s why it happens on the outside – from the awakening that happens within. Who else are we seeing glowing?

“This is really personal. Two fronts that I’m referring to. My husband’s health journey has taken a turn and the prospects are not looking good – information we got this week. And when that happens, you go into deep grief and fear and all kind of imaginings. And I decided I can’t stay there. You know, I’m going to be walking this walk with him. And we have to still laugh together and enjoy the love that we have and each day and stay in the present moment. The quote that I told you about earlier helps me a lot – from theologian Frederick Buechner. He said the place God wants to take you is the place between your deep gladness and the world’s great hunger. And there you have this deep place that we have to in these times find within ourselves. We need to really find our rudder and deepen our rudder within our own individual consciousness and self to be there in the world for people. You can cry and grieve, but you can’t stay there. You’ve got to move toward the light. And the thing that it brings me to is your body. Bring yourself to the miraculous thing that your body is and enjoy your five senses.

I’ve read that your five senses are the way to grace. It’s a shortcut to grace – to be outdoors and to find awe. Amen.”

Absolutely! We appreciate these examples. We sometimes feel the reality of something beautiful more when it can be articulate out loud and shared.

Is there any other glowing – any coming into one's own that you would like to share aloud? I know that I am touched by our Neighborhood Vigil each week. Neighbors looking for a place to be in this time of hopeful transition in our public environment (hopeful – emphasis there).

Let's go into this day of transfiguration, confident that God's love will glow through each of us and heightening our awareness of how to recognize that in each other, elicit it, and name it aloud. Let's appreciate the glowing in each one of us. God's love is counting on us. Amen.

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Matt. 17:1-9 "Now I Become Myself"