

Last Sunday after the Epiphany—Year C  
Exodus 34:29-35  
Psalm 99  
II Corinthians 3:12-4:2  
Luke 9:28-36, [37-43a]

We come to today with **heavy hearts**, and maybe **frightened** ones too. How could we not? **Russia has invaded Ukraine**, with **no provocation from Ukraine**, reminiscent of **invasions that unleashed WWII**—all of **Europe**, indeed all of the **western alliance**, is **on edge**. **Innocents are dying; innocents are suffering; innocents** have had their **lives turned upside down** unleashing its own **humanitarian crisis**. No doubt **eastern European countries are preparing for waves of refugees**. And **people inside of Russia** also are **suffering**, and **protesting**, a war that they **did not seek** and that they **do not want**. And there is the unbelievably tragic **moral injury of war** that comes to **all those who participate in it**.

As **people of God**, as **followers of Jesus**, how do we **sit with this**? What do we do with this? What **hope**, or **counsel**, can we **find in our lessons today**, in our **prayers**, in the **songs we sing**, in this **sacred meal we consecrate and share**?

*First*, sometimes, all we can do is **bring our heavy, frightened hearts into this sacred space** and **sit with what feels overwhelming**, sit with our **deep awareness** that we, in our **individual selves**, are **powerless to fix this**, that we in **Boone, NC** are **powerless to change events in Russia and Ukraine**. We **bring it here** and **sit together** in the *knowledge* that “**when two or three of us are gathered together in his Name, Christ is in the midst of us.**” *We aren’t holding this alone.*

*Second*, we **give voice in our prayers**. We **plead**, we **petition**, we **intercede**, we **cry out knowing** that “**the Spirit is praying within us in sighs too deep for words.**” We **give voice to the unspeakable, even when we don’t have the words**, and **Christ carries those prayers straight into the heart of God** who can hold what we cannot.

*Third*, we **sing**; we **never stop singing**. All those who have sought liberation from oppression have always **taught us that you sing your way to freedom**. When we **don’t have words for the ache in our hearts**, we **sing the ache**, we **sing the yearning**. And whether it’s the **lyrics of the hymn**, or **something in the music**, or a **place in the harmony**, something **softens in our heart** and **releases the pressure** and **lets the energy out** deepening our capacity to **stay present at the foot of the cross** while, *at the same time*, trusting that **Easter will come**.

*Fourth*, we **consecrate and share this sacred meal knowing** that, somehow, **Christ’s willingness to have his body broken so that we may share in it, knowing that Christ’s willingness to pour out his blood so that we may drink him in, knowing that Christ doesn’t dodge brokenness but redeems it, and transforms it, and redirects it to give us life and to make whole again what is so broken.**

And *finally*, there is our **sacred text, scriptures** which **lift our eyes** and **place us in a different space** where *we can see from a different vantage point*.

Our reading from **Exodus** reminds us that **glory does indeed come in the wilderness**. The people of God were wandering around lost as could be, *and yet*, God finds Moses *there* and fills him with glory and gives him the words the people of God need to hear that Moses can then speak to them in commandment. In that wilderness space, God provides a framework, a way to live, that will be lifegiving as the people continue to confront all the difficult choices ahead of them. That is no small thing.

**II Corinthians** reminds us that **minds can be hardened, not just hearts**. And while I disagree mightily with Paul's distinction that the people of Israel's minds are veiled, but those who turn to the Lord have their minds unveiled—that's a little too "*we're all good and they're all evil*" dualistic for me—even so, this concept of hardened, veiled minds feels really important.

We have to **be on guard for what is happening in our minds**, and this is where the **tsunami** of misinformation and disinformation and sensational information that comes at us all the time feels pertinent. *We* must seek to go deeper and put on the mind of Christ, which may mean turning off the 24/7 adrenalin-laden news cycle. *We* need to turn to Christ and allow him to lift from us whatever is clouding our sight, to gaze upon him and, and to trust that what Paul describes *is* happening to us *and* in us. Hear Paul again: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." We can't *make* this happen, but only *allow* Christ to work this transformation within us. This is the only way to keep our minds clear to then see the lifegiving paths ahead.

And then **Luke's story of the transfiguration** comes to us reminding us that **glory is never far from the passion**. When Moses and Elijah join Jesus in glory on that mountain, they are "speaking of his departure, which he is about to accomplish in Jerusalem." Jerusalem is code language for all the events and choices that will lead Jesus to the cross—a journey we also call "the passion." Peter, James, and John, they are weighed down with sleep, only just able to stay awake, and Peter can't even entertain the possibility of what awaits Jesus in Jerusalem. *They want time to stop right there, build three booths to contain that glorious moment and call it a day.*

But Jesus is bound for Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem he must go. And thank God for that because as *this* week has shown us, Jerusalem is always unfolding somewhere—that nexus of power and control that is always willing to inflict suffering on innocents and is so, so threatened by a love that goes deeper—a love of neighbor, a love of God, a love of freedom, a love of *all* of humanity. At that intersection stands the cross, and *that* is *always* where Jesus will plant himself holding all the pain and longing in his wide embrace.

Peter, James, and John may want to hang back on that mountain, but God is clear, *our* path is to follow Jesus wherever he goes. And to get them to see this deeper truth, God *puts them* in the cloud. Hear Luke's telling again: "While [Peter] was saying this, a cloud came and

overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’”

The uncertainty of world events on so many levels these days is a cloud—we *can't see clearly at all*. *And yet*, amidst that cloud, we get the direction we need—listen *to* Jesus, listen *for* his voice, go where he goes, do what he does, follow him, follow him *to* the cross, follow him *to* the tomb, sit with him *in* death, *then* take his hand and follow him *into* the unfathomable life that lies beyond.

Amidst that cloud, we get the direction we need—

- Be the peacemakers Jesus calls us to be;
- pray, pray, and pray some more—  
    *never underestimate the power of people praying across the globe,*  
    that's part of what brought down the Berlin wall;
- speak truth to power  
    that Christ gives us the mind to know and the courage to speak;
- never give up on the ministry of reconciliation  
    that is **our inheritance** and **our call**;
- hold brokenness with compassion;
- do not go the way of violence—not in your *actions*, not in your *speech*—  
    but answer violence with the love that is more powerful still.

Work out all these things with one another when the way is not clear. Trust that in discernment with one another and with Christ the way forward *will* become known.

And when you don't know what else to do, bring it to him, sit with him, and rest *there knowing*, as the Collect prays, “As we behold by faith the light of his countenance, we may be strengthened to bear our cross and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory.”

Jerusalem is *always* ahead, and much will die in the process, *and yet*, in the power of Christ, we will discover the depth of life and love that can never be contained in a booth but only shine forth from the cross. Amen.

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