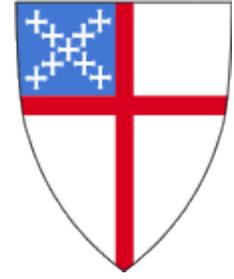


The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Last Sunday after Epiphany



Year A
RCL

- [Exodus 24:12-18](#)
- [2 Peter 1:16-21](#)
- [Matthew 17:1-9](#)
- [Psalm 99](#)

The Way of Love – Preparing for Lent

February 23, 2020

The Rev Dr. Gail Shafer

A friend of mine once proclaimed that she was “geeked for Lent”. At the time she was the minister of music and choir director at my church. She is a wonderful musician, and she was speaking both to the spiritual and the musical parts of her soul. Lent offers those times we need to be quiet, and contemplate our relationships, and those times when we need to marshal our creative talents, and “Bring It”. We are reminded in scriptures of the season of the depth of God’s love for us, and all He has done throughout the ages.

As we contemplate the scriptures read for today, let’s gather at the base of the mountain, and go up with Jesus, Peter, James and John. Jesus identity as the

Christ is even more apparent as he physically reflects the light of God, shining through him like the lamp on a stand to give light to the whole world. As if it weren't enough to see Him join Moses and Elijah in conversation – God's voice booms out from the cloud, "this is my Son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased. Listen to Him." No wonder the companions had to be reassured. Once again, Jesus used that phrase heard when ever God is so near "be not afraid."

Even without the change in his appearance, with his face shining like the son, and his clothes becoming dazzling white, these companions of Jesus know that He is just who God is telling them he is. They know of His gentle demeanor with those who are so wounded they need the most-gentle of touches. They know of his command of scripture, and his ability to order around the demons and spirits they encounter as they travel the land, healing the sick., and casting out those demons. They have had the experience of Jesus calming the sea, walking on water, providing food enough for thousands in the middle of no where.

The mountain experience is one-way God lets us know that these people, Moses, Elijah, and most of all Jesus, stand out. They are invited onto the sacred ground, where to those who watch and wait looks foreboding. Moses' face shone like the

son after each encounter with God. There could be no doubt to these witnesses of Jesus relationship with God.

After the resurrection, some of Jesus's followers wondered if he was coming back. And they wondered if they needed to continue to live lives of generosity and Christian piety. Peter is reassured them, he had seen this vision. He was there. No doubt in his mind that Jesus is the son of the living God and will be coming back. But he was going to return in God's own time.

This vision of Jesus transformation gives us something to hang our hats on as we enter Lent. Those forty days and forty nights that we experience every year, with all the drama, and fasting, and expectation. The chance to prepare our selves for the miracle of Easter. This is a story worth telling. This is the Good News.

Are you ready with your Lenten resolution? Ready to give up chocolate? What about trying a new tradition, one where you take on something. A discipline, like reading passages from the Bible, or helping a friend, volunteering, any number of good things. What would make you a better Christian, a better person?

In this time of division in our country, and the world, this seems like a really good time for all of us to be creative in new ways to be positive. To be loving toward each other and toward those we have never met that need our love.

Our national church has outline something Presiding Bishop Curry has named the “Way of Love”. If you Google “The Episcopal Church, the way of love” you will find a number of resources that outline a series of practices that are helpful in our pursuit of living a more positive, Christian life.

Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry issued the following invitation to all of us to follow the way of love:

“An Invitation from Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry to Practice the Way of Love

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

– Ephesians 3:17-19

In the first century Jesus of Nazareth inspired a movement. A community of people whose lives were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God’s unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love. Before they were called “church” or “Christian,” this Jesus Movement was simply called “the way.”

Today I believe our vocation is to live as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. But how can we together grow more deeply with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so we can bear witness to his way of love in and for the world?

*The deep roots of our Christian tradition may offer just such a path. For centuries, monastic communities have shaped their lives around rhythms and disciplines for following Jesus together. Such a pattern is known as a “Rule of Life.” The framework you now hold – **The Way of Love: Practices for Jesus-Centered Life** – outlines a Rule for the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. It is designed to be spare and spacious, so that individuals, ministry groups, congregations, and networks can flesh it out in unique ways and build a church-wide treasure trove of stories and resources. There is no specific order you need to follow. If you already keep a Rule or spiritual disciplines, you might reflect and discover how that path intersects with this one. By entering into reflection, discernment and commitment around the practices of **Turn - Learn - Pray - Worship - Bless - Go - Rest**, I pray we will grow as communities following the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus. His way has the power to change each of our lives and to change this world.*

Your brother in the Way of Jesus, +Michael”

When you find yourself facing those who would attack you or your faith, or others or their faith, remind yourself that Jesus forgave those who persecuted, condemned and eventually killed him. He continues to forgive us, and leads us to follow the most important of the commandments: Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Amen