

## **A LIFE OF ACCEPTANCE**

### **2 Corinthians 4:3-6 & Mark 9:2-9**

I am trying to figure out if your sparkle more this week from the last time we gathered together. After all, we did celebrate Valentine's Day this past week and I was thinking maybe we would all shine after the day that fosters love with flowers, candy and maybe for some even a little bling. Does everyone know what the term "bling" means? Yes, it is diamonds.

Diamonds, as a commercial used to remind us, are forever. That's why they are worth a considerable amount of money. Diamonds are expensive because they are rare, elusive and found only in tiny bits and pieces. They are a chosen and cherished gem because of their sparkle and glow. They become brilliant with an inner fire when light hits them. Place a diamond in a drawer and without the reflective light, you might mistake it for ordinary glass. For all those who have ever accepted a diamond as a gift, what was your response? Were any of you speechless?

Yet diamonds aren't the only things that can leave us speechless or what some term as breathless. There are some gifts in life that are so precious that we can't find words adequate to describe what we feel or experience.

On one of his many travels across the United States Charles Kuralt unexpectedly spent a night on Mount McKinley. He had planned just a day visit, but the plane that carried him to the glacier was unable to bring him

back. Since it was getting late Charles and Izzy, a photographer who worked with him, would have to spend the night. Charles admits a feeling of fear swept over him in that strange deserted place.

There was a cabin on the mountain not too far from where they were, their pilot told them. They would be able to spend the night there. The men hiked for nearly an hour before they found the simple cabin. The cabin was small, six-sided and half buried in snow. Inside there were “sleeping shelves” along the walls. What seemed strange to Charles when he first arrived were the large windows. After eating a meal the men were ready for bed. They looked out those windows and were taken by surprise at what they saw. They stayed up watching in delight and wonder. The scene faded away only with the rising of the sun. Both of them were left in awe and exhausted. That morning Charles began to wonder if maybe the pilot left him on the mountain on purpose. Maybe the pilot sized them up as a couple of guys who thought they were in a bigger hurry than they really were and would benefit from a night to slow down and look around and think about this place where they were. It would be a night that Charles Kuralt would never forget.

When Jesus took Peter, James and John with him to the top of the mountain and was transfigured before their eyes, they too had a communal experience that they would never forget. What happened on top of that mountain apparently could not be explained by the disciples as evidenced by their lack of speech. But that doesn't make it meaningless. For some, many of our formative, transformative, life-changing experiences are not “explainable” in the worldly scientific sense.

How many of you have ever experienced a “life changing” experience, in other words something happened to you that is difficult to explain? Well, you are not alone, a recent Gallop Poll reported that 85% of the people interviewed said that they had had what is called a “mystical” experience with God. This is a very high percentage! But, when you think about it, there have been those moments in life when we experience God’s presence and purpose in ways that are deep, profound and real. Even though we can’t explain it, it is real beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Now, although those times are memorable, they don’t last forever ... we eventually come down from that mountain in order journey or walk in the daily... in other words, we need to get back to the everyday experiences of life. Those ordinary places where we “shine” if you will, in our relationships with family and friends. There is a saying that “what comes up ... most come down” or does it?

William Boggs’ grandfather played a very important role in his life. Grandpa Boggs had been blind for nearly 20 years. Grandpa would tell you quickly that the way the world was going he didn’t much care to see it anyway. He did have one regret however. He had never seen his grandson.

Sensing death was closing in on him, William’s grandfather began praying more intensely for the Lord to give him sight, just long enough to see his grandson before he died. The doctors had told him that it was an impossibility because his eyes had long since turned a milky blue from a disease.

One day Grandpa was playing with his grandson when suddenly he could see. The whole family ran out into the yard to see what all the fuss was and quickly grew quiet as it became apparent that his vision had returned. Grandpa picked up his grandson, whom he had never seen, and stared at him with an intensity that frightened the child. William remembers holding his face between his small hands while both of them cried. Then in the most frightening moment of all, Grandpa saw something in William. It was an unbelievable, once in a lifetime experience. Grandpa looked his grandson in the eyes and softly said, “a preacher”. That was all he said. Just those two words so quietly uttered with a tone of surprise. Thirty years later William wonders which was the greater miracle “that he could see or that he could see something so deeply hidden in William and William’s distant future. William believes that his grandfather’s voice that day was the voice of God.

On that mountain, Peter, James and John’s eyes were opened as they saw God in Christ. In the beginning of this sermon series we started with the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Mark where Jesus comes to the river Jordan and is baptized by John. It was then that a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Today we end this series with Jesus on the mountain top where a voice came from the cloud, “This is my Son, the Beloved, the same as in chapter 1 except the following two words are added ... LISTEN TO HIM!”

As we prepare for our Lenten journey which begins next week, what are some ways we can listen to Jesus? Just prior to this transfiguration gospel, Jesus called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” What does it mean to take up our cross?

It is later in this gospel of Mark that Jesus shares when questioned about which commands are the most important of all he has shared with them that he answers his disciples with “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you mind and with all your strength.” And the second is “love your neighbor as yourself.” He states that there are no other commandments greater than these. So let’s listen to Jesus and accept the love of God in the priceless gift of Christ.

A way in which we accept the love of God in Christ is at this table. Remember Jesus’ words to his disciples at the Last Supper, “DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.” This sharing of the bread and drinking of the cup wasn’t just something nice to do on occasion, it was a sacred moment, a sacrament, wherein when we partake we sparkle. Our Lord invites us all this morning to come and experience a little BLING! Amen.

