

**TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY, LAST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY, YEAR C
FEBRUARY 27, 2022**

There once was a little boy who decided he wanted to go find God. He knew it would probably be a long trip to find God, so he decided to pack a lunch, four packs of Twinkies and two cans of root beer. He set out on his journey and went a few blocks until he came to a park. In this park on a bench, sat an old woman looking at the pigeons.

The little boy sat down beside her, and he watched the pigeons too. After a while he grew hungry and so he pulled out some Twinkies. As he ate, he noticed the woman watching him, so he offered her a Twinkie. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him.

There was something about her smile that fascinated the boy. He thought it was the most beautiful smile he had ever seen, and he wanted to see it again. So, he brought out the cans of root beer, opened one and offered her the other one. Once again, she smiled that beautiful smile.

For a long time, the two sat on that park bench, eating Twinkies, drinking root beer, smiling at each other, and watching the pigeons. But neither said a word. Finally, the little boy realized that it was getting late and that it was time to go home. He started to leave, took a few steps, then turned back and gave the woman a big hug. Her smile was brighter than ever before.

When he arrived back home, his mother noticed that he was happy, yet somehow quiet. "What did you do today?" she asked, trying to figure out what was going on. "Oh, I had lunch in the park with God," he said. Before his mother could reply he added, "You know she has the most beautiful smile I have ever seen."

Meanwhile the woman had left the park and returned to her home. Her son noticed something different about her. "What did you do today, Mom?" he asked. "Oh, I ate Twinkies and drank root beer in the park with God," she said. And before her son could say anything, she added. "You know he is a lot younger than I had imagined."

I love this story not only because it turns our image of God upside down but because it also shows us how God appears in our lives in surprising places. It's about how things don't always appear to be what they are. It's about how God comes to us in the everyday living of our lives.

In today's Gospel, Peter, James and John went up the mountain to have a little prayer time with Jesus and then in a flash not only does Jesus' appearance change before them but their perspective and understanding of who Jesus is does too. You can tell from Peter's response that they are stunned and not quite sure what to do.

Peter wants to build tents or dwelling places. It's a knee jerk reaction and an unhelpful one as well. He is suddenly confronted with an unimaginable vision. Part of him wants to preserve this moment. It's a beautiful and awesome moment – a moment where he feels close to God so he wants to build tents to hold onto God and to celebrate this wonderful experience. If the scene happened today, you can bet Peter would have been there with his Iphone, trying to capture the scene from all angles.

We're not that different from Peter. We love to stop and freeze the frame at the bright and happy moments of our lives. It is no coincidence that we call those moments "sittin' on top of the world or mountain top experiences." Those moments such as when we got married, our child was born, or we got the job we wanted, we bought the house of our dreams. Too often we think life is about those high, exciting times when everything

is working right and there is no pain or struggle. We would all like to build a tent or dwelling to these times too--because life seems so grand and right at that moment.

But Luke's Gospel does not allow us to separate those exhilarating moments from pain. After Jesus and his disciples came down off the mountain, they were confronted by the needs of the world. A man seeks healing for his son who is having convulsions. God pushed them off the mountain top into the realities of ordinary life. Howard Thurman, a theologian said, "God expects us to come into God's presence with the smell of life upon us." In other words, we live most of our lives in the midst of the ordinary with God, who chooses to come to us through the earthiness and smells of life. Most of our life is not about those mountaintop events, but rather what happens to us in the valleys and plains of day-to-day living.

If Peter had succeeded in freezing the frame, capturing the light of God in the face of Jesus, and holding onto it forever, he would never have come down the mountain into the rest of life, where the real ministry of Jesus was taking place. The mountaintop experience served the purpose of inspiration and hope, but it is in the ordinary, everyday life that God comes to us.

If you have had to wait for results of tests that will tell you if the growth on your breast is cancerous you know what it is like to pray for the presence of God in the midst of your fear. If you have stood at the bedside of a loved one who is dying and you don't know whether to pray for death or continued painful life, you know what it is like to seek the solace of God in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, rather than the mountain top of life. If you have been in the midst of a family crisis or are trying to reestablish a strained relationship you understand the presence of God in the midst of ordinary pain.

God comes to us in the midst of everyday life and ordinary existence. If we choose to cling only to the beautiful, the pleasant, the good and fun things of life, then we are really not choosing to live life out of its fullness and beauty; rather we are choosing a life of denial.

There is so much that cries to us in the midst of everyday life. The hard truth of the realities of prejudice, racism, hunger, famine, and war challenge us every day as we try to go about our work and our living. There is a hunger for justice and love; people are starving for equality and fairness. So much of the world is not a pretty sight; so much in this world is made up of despair and sorrow.

These are the hard facts and events of life where we live. We are not called to stay on the mountain top, shielding our eyes and turning away; but we are called to ask hard questions, share feelings, and have an opinion about how we, as persons of faith, need to respond and care about the world in which we live.

We don't know ahead of time what mountains and valleys lie ahead of us. We don't know how God will speak, and how Jesus might appear to us. But we can trust in this: whether on the brightest mountain, or in the darkest valley, God is with us. Even when everything else we're counting on disappears, God remains among us — God alone.

So, keep looking and listening for the sacred, no matter where the journey takes you for the light of God comes to us in the midst of our ordinary living. Perhaps it's time to behave like the little boy in the story that through his sharing and ridding himself of any preconceived notions he found God. He and the old woman found God in twinkies and

root beer and beautiful smiles and innocence. They found God because they were open to find God in the ordinary. Let us follow Jesus into the ordinariness and earthiness of the world because that is where we just might meet God and another may find God in you. Amen.