

Every year, on the last Sunday of the Epiphany Season, just before we turn the corner to Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent, the church pauses to remember the Transfiguration: the moment when Jesus, high on a mountain in the presence of three beloved disciples is glorified by God right before their eyes. Scripture tells of an intense and unexpected moment of other-worldly beauty and holy mystery that awed and terrified those present. Found in three of our four gospels, it is significant. First, because it is a moment of revelation — a sneak peek if you will into who Jesus really is and of the glory of God that is present on earth and yet to come. It is also at once amazing, wholly unbelievable, impossible to explain, or to prove. Thus, it calls us to suspend our disbelief and to hold the mystery with awe. Yet, the disciples, and perhaps we too, are left with more questions than answers.

But then, isn't that how God's in-breaking into our lives and the world goes? When asked about her poetry and how through it she invites the reader to find comfort in not having all the answers, Poet, Mary Oliver, observed,

*"So many of us live most of our lives, seeking the answerable. And somehow, we then demean or bypass those things that can't be answered, and therefore rob our lives of the acceptance and pleasure of mystery, of the willingness to welcome and hold mystery. To live **with** mystery is a gift."*

Counter to our insatiable human need make sense of everything and to have all the answers, we witness here an event that defies explanation, that unsettles and disorients; that shocks and delights;

Jesus' transfiguration calls us first to take notice and observe. Next, rather than try to understand, to simply listen to what God might be saying to us. Then, if we are willing, to surrender our need for answers or control, so that we might allow ourselves to rest a while in the holy, inexplicable, unanswerable divine mystery of God.

One year ago while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we visited the Mount of Temptation in Jericho, a monastery built into the mountainside that is said to be the location of Jesus' temptation by the devil. And it was there that our own Tracy Jones had a profound experience of God's inbreaking.

"The moment my feet crossed the threshold into the silent chapel where the monks pray", she said, "the room suddenly got hazy. My eyes welled up and I began to feel disoriented, and afraid."

There, Across the chapel, Rev. Laurel and Rev. Rachel, saw me, asked if I was ok, and then motioned for me to come and sit with them in the pew. And in that moment, a flood of tears came."

Certain that this was God breaking in, Tracy tried to make sense of what happened. She knew that she wasn't sick, but she also didn't feel normal. After a few minutes of sitting in the silence of this ancient chapel, Tracy noticed the latent aroma of incense, and that a peaceful calm had come over her. She returned home, acutely aware of the experience, but unable to find words to do it justice.

We may think that encounters like Tracy's, or Peter's on the mountaintop are rare, are more the exception than the rule. Yet, over and over again in scripture we see how Jesus shows up and breaks into the depths of people's lives and suffering to shine forth God's glory with healing, with forgiveness, with acknowledgement and with love.

Over and over again, God breaks into the moments of our lives. God is not to be found off in the distance, but is right here — eager to be seen and known; eager to remind us that there is so much more to life than the finite moments in which we live.

And yet, We work so hard to have all the answers, don't we? We like to be people who "know", because it makes us feel safer; makes us feel more in control of our lives. But this quest for answers or proof is exhausting work that can leave us weary. It is an insatiable invitation to our egos that convinces us that we can never know enough, and that we can never be satisfied with not knowing.

Yet, what more do we really need to know or to behold but that our Glorious God who came to shine light into the darkness of the world, is ever shining light upon us, and will ever be doing so.

God breaks in. In significant ways, like the transfiguration, in unexpected ways, like Tracy at the monastery, and in the smallest of ways in each of our lives. God shows up in a note of thanks, a call of concern, a chance encounter, a beautiful piece of music, in the laughter and tears, in the warmth of the sun on the labyrinth after a week of rain. We don't always know or understand how things happen. And the beauty is that we do not need to. All we need to do is welcome in the mystery and beauty of our God, who is at work in our world and in our lives.

How might God be calling you to surrender your need to know and to have all the answers? How might you accept and embrace holy mystery as a part of life?

If we were to give ourselves the grace and space, the permission to not know, might our lives be transformed? With room to notice and wonder, to hold tenderly the inexplicable, I imagine we might find there surprise, ease, pleasure, and immense joy. We might discover that God's glory is nothing to fear, and not ours to manage. We might realize that to live with mystery God's gift to us. For within it is found possibility and hope.