

Holographic Jesus Luke 9:28-36

St. Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston, WV February 7, 2016

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

When we began this season of Epiphany, with the coming of the wise men from the East, and the Baptism of the Lord, that first sermon in this Epiphany series looked at how our lives are like a 1,000 piece puzzle – each piece going together to form a finished work called our life. Each piece represents a person, a relationship, an event – all the pieces of our life that don't seem to make sense in their separate pieces, until they begin to come together to form the completed puzzle.

The next week, Janet gave us each a puzzle piece, and showed us what the completed puzzle should look like, although we surely couldn't see that from just our individual pieces. But, she interpreted our scripture lesson that day from Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth, about how we EACH have a unique and valuable piece to add to the puzzle. It's all gift, so none of us have a piece more valuable than another. We do each need to play our part.

Last week we looked at both psalm 19 and Luke's account of Jesus' announce-ment of what His life's ministry was going to be about. And we saw how the Plan of God, and the assembly of our life's puzzle pieces requires more than just our good plans and efforts. ***For there is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. And yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*** There is more to life than what meets in the eye (ears, nose, mouth, or touch.) Like "dark matter" the Kingdom of God is a mystical thing that requires us to allow deeper senses to connect us.

Today, as every year we end the season of Epiphany on the Mount of Transfiguration. Every year, we go from the Mount of Transfiguration on Sunday to Shrove Tuesday to Ash Wednesday, and then we are in the season of Lent – a time of spiritual practice, like a laboratory, leading up to Easter.

But, not yet! First, the Mount of Transfiguration. Because we do it every year, there is always the temptation to – as Peter said – build some tents (or tabernacles, or monuments – depending on

your Bible translation) to make this a fixed place, to turn this into a religious piece of calcified rock, which once spew fire, power, and beauty like a live volcano.

How can we keep alive the regular annual religious observances, how do we still pay attention to what is going on at these yearly way stations?

One way is to experience the event, with more than just our ears.

I have a picture that I will walk through the congregation so you can see – the content of the picture is not so important for this exercise as what is going on with the picture.

[walk down to picture on stand and carry it among congregation, while continuing, with these words:] This is a HOLOGRAPHIC JESUS. As you turn your head, or as the picture turns to a slightly different angle, you can see a different picture. Actually, in this holographic picture, you can see three different scenes from the life of Jesus:

1. Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper
2. Jesus being crucified
3. Jesus as the Good Shepherd

How do they do it – these HOLOGRAMAMS? I don't know; it's a mystery to me. But there's more to the process than meets the eye. I'll get back to that.

We are used to holograms in our daily life, so much so that we probably don't even realize how much we see them. They are on credit cards, for the purpose of preventing forgeries. They are also contained on CD, DVD, and software covers.

Do you see the different images? Something that you think is one thing and it turns into something else – right there in front of your eyes.

It's something like what happened to Peter, James, and John. There the four of them were – counting Jesus. And all of a sudden, here come Moses and Elijah. (You can look at the mosaic floor to ceiling art work in Bennett Chapel behind the altar table for one representation of what that might have looked like.) But, what they saw was suddenly changed – more people and Jesus' "raiment" was changed to "Dazzling White." (not a color that is in my paint collection – "Dazzling White.")

Wow! Like a hologram, right up there on the mountain – and they'd never heard of a hologram.

Now, I want us to do a little practice. I want you to pick out someone in this congregation – it may be the person who is sitting in front of you – and if you are in the choir, front row, it may be someone else in the congregation.

Pick out someone, perhaps not sitting right in front of you, but someone that you know well enough that you can close your eyes and picture what they look like.

Now I want you to close your eyes, and place a picture of them into your "mind's eye." Think about what they look like. Think about their eyes, their ears, their mouth, facial hair – if any, head hair,

clothing that they are wearing today. Think about all that you can recall from how they look before you close your eyes.

Now – with your eyes still closed – listen to just one more piece of scripture – not one you have heard today – but from Matthew’s Gospel – from the Beatitudes, in Matthew, chapter 5: ***Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.***

With your eyes closed, and that person’s image in your mind, allow God’s holographic work to purify your heart for just a moment – it’s not going to last for more than a moment – but pray that you will be able to see that person as they appear in God’s sight – MADE IN GOD’S OWN IMAGE.

Take a moment and just allow something to happen.

Take a moment, while I am silent, to allow some of that mystical power that transcends normal five senses to work on the movie screen in your mind. See that person transfigured into the image of God.

[silence]

You might have noticed that the words that came from heaven while Jesus was turned into “dazzling white” about Him being God’s beloved child are the same words that were spoken from heaven at Jesus’ baptism.

Here at Saint Marks, we use a different translation to remember our Baptismal Name – BELOVED CHILD OF GOD, PRECIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL TO BEHOLD.

Here’s another interesting thing about HOLOGRAMS:

If you cut a hologram into pieces, every single piece carries the same information as in the whole.

And THAT my sisters and brothers, is how your life is put together with all the pieces. In the first sermon in Epiphany, I talked about how each piece of the puzzle represents and experience in life, a person, a relationship, etc. And we don’t know how they all go together, until we look at the puzzle taking shape. I suggested then that we might like to have the pieces numbered so we could tell how it all goes together, but that is not how life is.

But, we learned in that first sermon – every single piece of your life carries on the back side, the mark of your baptism: BELOVED CHILD OF GOD, PRECIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL TO BEHOLD.

The picture puzzle, as it comes together is sometimes like this holographic Jesus picture – it doesn’t turn out always the way we think it is going to.

There ARE surprises. What we thought was happening – a DISASTER – we are able to look back at and see that it really was a blessing.

AND as the pieces of our holographic life puzzle are coming together, the whole carries the same identity as each piece – our life is meant by God to demonstrate that we – all the pieces

together – the dark pieces and the light pieces – the pretty pieces and what might seem to be ugly pieces – all come together – as God’s beloved child, precious and beautiful to behold.

And so, too – all of the other people God has made – not just us.

The exercise that I had you to do – to imagine that your heart is pure, so that scripture would be fulfilled – ***blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*** – that purification can take place as you continue in this exercise.

In the Orthodox Church, they discovered a translation of today’s passage that suggests that the TRANSFIGURATION that occurred on the mountain, was NOT of JESUS, but rather it was Peter, James and John who were transfigured by what they experienced.

How can we keep alive the regular annual religious observances, how do we still pay attention to what is going on at these yearly way stations?

Let me suggest that one way to keep today’s scripture alive is to PRACTICE IT – practiced the Transfigured life – on a daily basis, and don’t keep it wrapped up inside a leather bound book that we call “holy” and which stays on the coffee table.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.

Blessed are those who look to see the God within their neighbor and their hearts will become pure.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.