

Shine with the Transfigured Jesus

Good morning Fellowship of Hope! I truly appreciate your invitation for me to give the message this morning. My hope is that together, we will take this message to further the counter-script that you are creating here in the Elkhart area to the rest of the community, to other-like minded people, to those who think differently than we do, and hopefully to the rest of the world. “[A] world [that is] beyond our control” as Walter Brueggemann states in his article which is guiding your congregational theme for this year.

Like you, there are ways in which I aim to do my part to control and influence the world around me in positive ways and I know, that in so many areas, I fail to come close to my aspirations. I can sure talk-the-talk, but when it comes to action, I fall short. Brueggemann says, that we become “engaged in the issues of the day. urgent and important as those issues are, that we forget that behind such issues is a metanarrative that is not about our particular social passion but about the world beyond our control.”

A world beyond our control. That’s a hard message for me to hear and maybe for some of you too. To know that we have no control over the particular social issues we care about? When I talk about these issues with people and about what should happen and what shouldn’t happen and what we as humans should be doing, I’m trying to take control of the world around me by making sense of it. It brings me comfort to discuss the ways in which things should be. It also brings me comfort when I sit on my computer and look up all the news stories of the day to make sure that I’m doing my part to be aware of current events. And it brings me comfort to check my facebook page to keep up-to-date with those closest to me. It brings me comfort to play games on my phone and to keep checking my email. Also, when I seek to purchase items to make me happy or when I

think that things I buy WILL bring me comfort. In all these instances, I am guilty of using an old script.

This old script makes us feel comfortable...The old script gives most people that sense of safety, security, and routine that we get comfortable with. Habits, rituals, and things we might not even think about, keep us tied down with old way of doing things, even though God is still present in the old script.

Brueggemann's counterscript creates a shift in how we seek to operate in our day-to-day American lives. But how do we enact change in a world that is beyond our control? How does Brueggemann's script ask us to change? Should this be happening every day? Or every time we feel the Old Script creeping in? Is it not our responsibility as followers of Jesus to stand for this counterscript? To stand against what Brueggeman says is the old script of the "therapeutic, technological, and consumerist militarism" that pervades our society and which all of us are guilty of using at certain points in our lives?

Well...Today is Transfiguration Sunday, a perfect day to talk about this shift. A day which represents a monumental shift not only in Jesus' status as the son of God, the bridge between heaven and earth, and the holiest of holies; but it's also a shift in how we seek to orient to God. In our liturgical calendar, this event falls on the last Sunday in Epiphany, before the season of Lent. This day brought forth Transformation for Jesus and now, for us, it takes us from the Old Script, the old way of thinking, to a new, alternate script, one that that begins with Jesus.

Shift, Change, Mutate, Transmutate, Transfigure, Transform, transition, transfer...

All of these words give us the feeling of the meaning of the word Transfiguration which goes beyond change. Change is just making or becoming different. Transfiguration is a **complete** change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. Jesus did not simply change the same way as Moses did in the Exodus text when he brought down the tablets from Mount Sinai.

Moses shined, but it was only a reflection of God's light, not a complete transformation. In the Exodus, Moses doesn't even know what is happening. On this day Jesus shines, emanating light from out of his body like lightning, rays from the sun, flowing with joy; peace; and glory!

In the Luke text, "the appearance of [Jesus'] face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white." While the Matthew text states "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." For now, just the outward appearance of Jesus has been altered. Next, the 3 disciples that are with Jesus all of a sudden see Elijah and Moses talking with him. Jesus, now stands in the divine realm and has been rewritten with the accompaniment of God; Moses, the Law of the Old Script; and Elijah, THE Prophet of the Old Script. God is now proclaiming his Son as the chosen one of the new counterscript. This transfer of status from Elijah and Moses, these cornerstones of the Old Testament, sets the stage for Lent and Jesus' movement towards Jerusalem and the cross.

Thinking about this text and what it means for our lives, I think about the experiences of my life that have been significant, life-changing. Completely altering how I act or feel into something more beautiful. Experiences that have called old scripts into question, experiences that have initiated counter scripts, experiences that have profoundly re-formed and transformed me...that have maybe even, transfigured me...

From the smaller scale experiences, the way in which I've had regrettable conversations with my wife or close friends; and then, when the conversation ends, I go back in back in my head analyzing, changing and rephrasing how I would've said things differently. This even happened in the past week when having a discussion with my close friend. I was holding on so tight to my comfortable way of being that I just had to get a word in, just had to have my voice heard, when really, I was the one that should have been listening.

Then there are the larger-scale times, as I'm sure many of you have experienced, when we've been in nature for extended periods of time. For me, it was the 4 consecutive summers I spent

working, tent-camping, eating, and guiding children through camp life exclusively in the outdoors of the Texas Hill Country. Each summer, this transformed my day-to-day life. As my year of teaching in public school would end and summer arrived, I approached this change to the outdoor living with much anticipation. The monotony of work life and waking up, making lunches, teaching, picking up kids, eating dinner, putting kids to bed, passing out with the kids was an old script, one that we are all familiar with. At Camp, I was transformed to another script: one of slowed-down living, appreciation for beauty in nature all around me, waking up with dew on the rainfly of the tent, drinking coffee and watching the sunrise, swimming in the creek, gazing at the stars, receiving a renewed sense of the Joy of my life. The transfigurations in my daily life seem easier to talk about when they involve large changes and when they offer a break or separation from ordinary life.

How do you think about transfiguration in your life?

How do we enact change in a world that is beyond our control? How does Brueggemann's script asks us to change? Is this a one-time transformation like Jesus, does it happen every day, or every time we feel the Old Script creeping in?

The transfiguration is about letting the light of God shine in us and through us. The good news of transfiguration is that the light of God is not just for Jesus, but for us. And just as Jesus glowed and was daily powered by it, so are we. The old scripts burn out the light. When we are transfigured, the obstacles to the light are transformed into light, and we shine. And we need this light to go through Lent.

The light of transfiguration fuels transformed action...purposefulness.

The new script is an end to worry and despair -

A new script of action.

In the face of climate change and the immense potential destruction that it would cause, We are transfigured into green- transportation, eating less meat, and supporting organizations that prioritize the health of the planet.

The new script is an end to inactivity and complacency -

A new script of purposefulness.

With millions hungry, We are transformed into supporting programs that provide food, shelter, and resources for those in need.

The new script is an end to repetition and routine -

A new script of excitement.

When we're bogged-down with everyday tasks, We are completely altering our mindsets and finding joy in the everyday.

Does it end with transformation? What is next? Does it end with a single act? Are we able to become transfigured? YES!

Next is Lent: the season of reflection and preparation, the soul-searching and gratitude, Spring and the new life it brings. We need this counterscript to follow Jesus into Jerusalem, to the cross, and tomb....All of us have ways we can be re-writing our new scripts and Brueggeman's counterscript as a community.

Now begins the work of the new script. The script that you are writing here in Elkhart and that I intend to help flourish in Goshen, and with those who may differ with me and with those who share similar opinions to me.

The counterscript of love, peace, action, justice, and mercy for all.

Start sharpening your pencils and preparing your erasers. We've all got stuff we can erase.

Let us shine.