**Becoming the Glory of God’s Presence**

Exodus 34:29-35  
Luke 9:28-43

“Bam, bam, bam, bam,…” “Peter!” “Bam, bam, bam, bam…” “PETER!” “Bam, bam, bam, bam,…” **“PETER!!”**

“Yes, Jesus.”

“What are you doing?”

“I am building three dwellings. One for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah”.

No one would accuse Peter of having mystical tendencies. Jesus kept dragging Peter up mountains, out into quiet places, all with the hope of helping Peter develop his capacity to more fully experience the holy, to know that in good times and in hard times he is never alone, that the love of God’s presence is as close as the air we breathe.

Peter was no mystic. As a fisherman he was constantly on the move. If the fish weren’t biting in one spot, he was off to another. You never saw Peter patiently waiting for the fish to arrive. When he got back to shore, you never saw Peter sitting around meditating on the beautiful sunset over Lake Galilee. Peter would start mending the nets or grab his hammer and do some needed repair work on the boat.

“Bam, bam, bam, bam…” “Peter”.

Recently I mentioned a book by Corrine Ware called “Discover Your Spiritual Types”. In the book Ware identifies four spiritual types and she says everyone has a tendency toward one or more of these spiritual types or spiritual orientations. Her basic argument is that these spiritual types reflect the means by which we feel closest to God, the Sacred, the Holy. In no particular order those spiritual types include the following. 1. Someone who feels closest to God through their minds, their intellect. They love words and their meaning. 2. Someone who feels closest to God through their heart. Relationships are crucial, expressions of feeling is essential. 3. Someone who feels closest to God through quiet contemplation, otherwise known as mystics. Attention to one’s inner life is of utmost importance. 4. Someone who feels closest to God by being engaged through their doing. Action and work are the core expressions of this spiritual type.

Those handful of folks who have been around Cherokee Park United as long as I have will recall a member by the name of Caroline Fiedler. Caroline gave meaning to the phrase cleanliness is next to Godliness. Caroline used to say that she felt closest to God when she was vacuuming. I am guessing you will have no difficulty in identifying the spiritual type for Caroline or for Peter. “Bam, bam, bam, bam….

According to Ware, all of us lean toward one or more of these spiritual types when it comes to the way in which we have a sense of God’s presence in our lives. None is better than the other. They simply reflect the different ways we as human beings are made up. Ware also insists that a healthy spiritual life is one that develops an appreciation for and capacity to experience the sacred through each of these spiritual orientations. The mystic – inner life, the thinking – rationale, the heart – feeling and the doing – activists are all needed in a healthy spiritual life, whether it be an individual or a community of faith.

Several years ago at our Leader’s Retreat we used Ware’s book and her typology as a resource for our discussion. All of the participants filled out a questionnaire intended to help identify the spiritual type or types to which they were most drawn. It came as no surprise that a number of people found themselves drawn to the doers. Nor was it a surprise we had a number of people drawn to a spiritual life through the mind and a number of people drawn to a spiritual life through the heart. Most of us, however, were surprised that within our leadership we also had a number of folks drawn to a more mystical orientation.

“Bam, bam, bam, bam….” Perhaps Peter was feeling left out on that mountain top. There is after all something in that mountain top experience for thinkers. Moses, who led the Israelites out of captivity into freedom and Elijah, the first in a line of many great prophets are both on the mountain with Jesus in conversation. This is a thinkers paradise. A person who loves words and stories could spend hours going ever deeper into what that all means.

There is clearly something on the mountain for the heart/relational oriented spiritual types. Moses, Elijah and Jesus standing together, deep in conversation, would have been sufficient in and of itself as a rich connection for their spiritual orientation, but it gets better. A voice is heard out of the clouds saying, “this is my son, my chosen, listen to him.” For those who feel closest to the holy through their heart and feelings it is a resounding affirmation that they too are children of God, and the path to God is in relationship.

Without question, this mountain top experience was a place for those who have a more mystical approach to their spiritual life. This, of course, is the part of the story that gets most folks attention. Virtually all the Biblical scholars speak about the mystical dimensions of this story and who can blame them. While Jesus is deep in prayer the appearance of his face changes and his clothes become dazzling white. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appear in glory and starting talking to him. Not too long after a cloud engulfs the mountain and a voice is heard, “This is my son, my chosen…” You have to have some mystical capacity with a well developed inner life for an experience like this to be anything other than frightening, as it was for Peter.

In many ways the mystical experience described on the mountain is hard to explain, which is why the story feels and sounds so otherworldly. But, especially for the thinkers in our midst, who like to try and make sense out of things, let me try and unpack this mystical experience with a contemporary example. Those of you who have smart phones, know they are essentially mini-computers with the added capacity to be used as a phone. One of the features on most smart phones is that you can turn them into what is called a hot spot by creating a wireless access point to the internet for anyone with whom you share your password. You don’t need to understand how all of this works. All you need to know is that a person with a smart phone can create a wireless hot spot that enables you to access the internet with your lap top or any other similar device. On the mountain, Jesus becomes the hot spot, the access point for the glory of God, the presence of God and this is what is meant when Luke describes the change in Jesus appearance, his clothes becoming dazzling white, a voice coming out of the clouds, saying this is my son, my chosen. Jesus is a hot spot for the glory of God’s presence.

Bam, bam, bam, bam… From the perspective of Peter who feels closest to the holy, closest to God, when he is active and engaged there appears little in this mountain top experience for him. No doubt this is the reason Jesus has dragged Peter up the mountain into these mystical clouds of unknowing. Peter, like all of us, needs to develop an appreciation for the many ways we might approach the Holy. Not just our doing, but also by nourishing our minds, strengthening our relationships, and most importantly a mystical awareness of God’s presence in all of life. It is the later that will be especially crucial for Peter and the disciples when with Jesus they turn toward Jerusalem and face the terror that ultimately awaits them.

At the foot of the cross, where we feel the pain of loss, the heartache of disappointment, the hopeless of failed dreams, the despair of violence, the powerlessness of unrelenting injustice, there is no amount of doing or activity that will see us through. Somehow, some way we need to let go of our all our organizing, take charge, get it done orientation of Peter and let ourselves be engulfed, embraced by the mercy, love and grace of God. There is no other way, which is why Jesus has brought Peter and the disciples up to this mountain top. Peter is a doer, so developing his inner life, this mystical approach to the sacred is no easy thing. The best thing he can do for now is shut up, be quiet, and do his best to listen and keep listening.

Fortunately for Peter and all of us doers, they do come down off the mountain, back to the place where ministry happens, the Realm of God’s justice is made known. Almost immediately the disciples encounter a crowd waiting to see Jesus. In the crowd is a man who in utter desperation calls upon the disciple to do something to help his only child, who is troubled by a terrible debilitating illness. Peter, the doer, the one so eager to get out his hammer and build something is unable to do anything, nor are the other disciples.

It sounds a little harsh, but given what they have been just through on the mountatin, one can readily understand the frustration of Jesus when he says to Peter and the other two disciples, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? “

Jesus has no interest in being the only hot spot for God. The invitation Jesus makes to all disciples is that individually and corporately we are called to become hot spots for the sacred, the holy where the glory of God shines through us. There is healing that is needed in our communities, in our families, in our nation, in our world. Be a doer. There is justice that needs to be proclaimed and lived out here on the road to Jerusalem, here on the road to St. Paul, here on the road to D.C., here on the road to your work place, here on the road to school, here on the road to every place where we might give witness to the Realm of God by our doing, by our action. Be a hot spot, become the people through whom the glory of God is revealed. This is our calling.

No matter what our primary spiritual orientation might be, mystical, thinking, relational or doing, all of them are at the service of proclaiming and making visible the Realm of God’s love and justice in this world, the only world we know. “Bam, bam, bam, bam…” Now is the time for your doing. Now is the time for making known the love and justice of God. In the famous words of folks singer Peter Seeger, *“If I had a hammer….I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning,  
I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters, All over this land.*  Be that hot spot. Become the glory of God’s presence.

**Exodus 34:29-35**

*In our first lesson we hear a story about Moses that is confirmation of why Moses is such a central figure for the people of Israel and ultimately foundational for followers of Jesus. Moses is someone in whom the sacred, the holy is at times so fully present that from the perspective of most people his appearance literally changes in ways that are frightening. As a leader, Moses leaves no doubt about the reality of the sacred and the holy in our world.*

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.  
  
**Luke 9:28—43**

*Our second lesson is commonly known as the transfiguration of Jesus, the story of Jesus going up a mountain Peter, James and John. The story connects Jesus with the rich tradition of his Jewish faith with the appearance of Moses and Elijah. It grounds Jesus and the disciples in the present by experiencing the glory of God’s presence, much like Moses. Finally, the story sends Jesus and the disciples back down the mountain where immediately they encounter the need in our world for the presence of God’s glory to be made known.*

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" — not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.  
  
On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.