

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 2

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

Sermon February 23rd 2020

God Invites Us into God's Presence

You have an engagement you need to be at in half an hour.

You get your jacket and boots on. Check your pockets to make sure you have everything. "Wait! Where is my phone?" You fling off your boots and start checking out the main places you usually leave your phone. It's not in the mud room on the side table. It's not on the kitchen counter. It's not in the living room. You start to panic. "Where could it be?"

You realize that if you are not out the door in two minutes you will be late. You take a deep breath. Clear your head. And think about where you might have left it. You run upstairs and check the bedroom. Nope. Now you are wondering if you left it somewhere outside the home. Your mind starts racing. "What if someone has taken it?" You try to remain calm. You check the stairs. Maybe it fell out. Too bad you decided to get rid of your landline. You might have been able to call your cell.

You look at the clock and see that you are going to be late. Out of instinct, you go to text the people you were meeting up with. "Wait a minute. I don't have my phone. Now they are going to be all worried." You go into complete panic mode. You check the fridge. You check the microwave. You check the oven. You check the food pantry. You were in there a minute ago sneaking a snack. It could be anywhere. You throw off the couch cushions. You fall to your knees begging for some help. Suddenly the phone rings. Thank goodness you had it on sound. You start following the ring. It takes you right to the bathroom where you left it. You pick up the phone and it's the people wondering where you are. You tell them about your chaotic moment, and that you are leaving the house now. You go to get in the car when you realize you don't have your car keys.

All of us at some point or another have been in a situation like this. Frantically looking for something before heading out of the house. When I reflect on this scenario I think of how at times in our lives, like looking for our phones, we can struggle to see God's presence.

For example, our lives are filled with commitments, whether it is to family, or friends, or our employers, or the organizations we

volunteer for or needing to keep the house up. We often find ourselves overwhelmingly busy trying to find a moment to catch our breath.

And then we are bombarded with so many different messages out there trying to grab our attention. Trying to get us to buy in. To believe in whatever they are selling. I am not surprised that like looking for our phones, sometimes we are scrambling through all the different voices out there to get back to hearing God's voice. It can be difficult with all these distractions to see God's presence.

Another example, is when we face suffering in our lives. Sometimes we are left asking the profound "Why?" question when life falls apart on us. When our world is flipped upside down. Sometimes, we are left feeling confused. Struggling to see God's presence. Struggling to find hope. Struggling to hear God's comforting voice promising us new life. Sometimes we miss out on God's invitation to us. Inviting us to walk into God's presence.

In our Exodus reading, the Israelites have recently left many years of slavery and oppression behind to follow Moses into the wilderness. They are beaten down hoping for new life. The first few years out in the wilderness have not gone as planned. They are struggling to feel God's presence. So, God invites Moses into God's presence to help guide Moses into caring for God's people. To show the people that God is present.

In our gospel, we hear Jesus inviting Peter, John, and James to go with him up the mountain. Peter, John, and James who have been suffering under Roman oppression. Longing for someone to come along and give them new life. To show them that God is present.

So, they climb this mountain. When they get to the top they see Jesus' appearance change. In this moment, they realize that Jesus is something more than just a prophet. Jesus is the messiah. The one who is to come to show them that indeed God is present. Then they hear a voice from heaven affirming this. They are standing in the presence of God.

Peter offers to build a tent, which is telling of our need to have a physical space to experience God. We see this need from the time of the tent of the tabernacle to the Temple period to today where we gather in churches. We come into the sanctuary believing that God is present with us. The church has become a place where we can get away from the distractions of life.

Where we can come with our suffering and feel, hear, and see God's presence.

Yet, Jesus breaks into our lives as a reflection of God. We experience God in Jesus' healing. In Jesus' teachings. In Jesus' miracles. In Jesus' forgiveness. In Jesus' death and resurrection. We experience God through Christ Jesus. So, what Jesus did for the people was establish opportunities to experience God outside the physical spaces we had created. Jesus invites us to follow him. And then as we become a community we are invited to continue to reflect Jesus's love so others can experience Christ's presence through us. Or in other words God's presence.

So, we create physical spaces where we come to experience God's presence and Jesus creates our community so we can experience God's presence in the presence of one another. In our second letter of Peter, we are reminded that through the Holy Spirit we are always standing in God's presence. Sometimes we are too distracted to see this. Sometimes we are too stuck in our suffering to see this. But, God is always there inviting us into God's presence.

We do this when we open our bibles and hear God's word. We do this when we come to the communion table and experience God's presence in the body and blood of our savior Jesus Christ. We do this at the font when the Spirit comes over us in the waters of baptism. We do this when we pray listening to God's guidance. We do this whenever we come together with others to reflect God's love in our community.

Transfiguration Sunday is all about being invited into experiencing God's presence and how this experience impacts our lives, whether it is becoming a leader or building a tent or living out our daily lives reflecting Christ's love. As we are flipping over the couch cushions. As we scramble through the distractions. As we try to understand our suffering. God is inviting us into God's presence. All we need to do is listen and walk into this presence.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks that you are always present in our lives. When we struggle to see this in the midst of flipping over the couch cushions of our lives open our hearts to hear your voice and to experience your presence. So that we may feel uplifted. Empowered to reflect your loving grace in the world. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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