**Exodus 34:29-35 (New International Version)**

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

## Luke 9:28-36

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**28**About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. **29**As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. **30**Two men, Moses and Elijah, **31**appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. **32**Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. **33**As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

**34**While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. **35**A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." **36**When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and told no one at that time what they had seen.

“Remove the Veil”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

February 27, 2022

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

“Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you. I want to see you.” [sung, from the opening of Michael Smith’s song]. I’ve been singing this song this week along with John Lennon’s “ . . . this ism, that ism, ism ism ism ism. All we are saying is give peace a chance.”

I often make jokes about the process by which I am able to write for Sundays. There aren’t any jokes to cover this week’s challenges. I can remember dancing in the streets when the war in Vietnam ended, because I had an *in*tangible sense of relief that my oldest brother would not have to die. I was ten, and I don’t remember seeing the images on t.v., because my mom didn’t turn on the news when I or my younger siblings were around. I know that most of you must remember the images and probably know in a more visceral sense that tragedy and horror are not always something at a distance, something remote. We learned that here, almost twenty-one years ago. Some of you probably also remember what you read and heard about the war in Korea, even if you didn’t yet have a t.v. at home; fewer still recall the stories of the Second World War. I have spent privileged hours talking with soldiers who were willing to tell me about their active faith and prayers and about their imaginative longings after battles while they tried to sleep in trenches and in the barns of strangers. What I understood most profoundly were the nerves, “*my nerves*” that one dear friend carried for the rest of his 94 years. What I often choose to focus on more acutely was the continued joy able to be mustered by another friend who lived over 100 years. These gentlemen knew war in their bones, and they sought peace in their homes.

We may not be “a nation at war” today in the sense of our learning these lessons with our bodies here, but we all are *feeling* the sorrow and the sadness that comes with believing humanity is one body, equally cherished by our Creator God. And so I know that I am not alone in struggling this week. We have t.v.’s in our living rooms and it seems we cannot avoid knowing about Ukrainian devastation and the fear for democracy. We want to be able *to do* something, and we feel inadequate to the task. Still, we have a sense that God’s glory may be visible *somehow*. We have heard it spoken and we have seen glimpses in our lifetimes. Too much, it seems, remains behind the veil, and so our faith, our action turns to prayer. My oldest brother learned Ukrainian at an Orthodox monastery in New Brunswick, NJ when I was a child. He used to say, and still will echo himself, that he loves to think of the monks there praying for the world; that monks somewhere at all times are praying for the world.

I would like to share two prayer-poems, the first from Ann Weems, whose psalms and whose fast-season prayers are some you have heard here before. The second is from John Roedel, who makes his own prayer practice, his own doubts and faith regularly public on a Facebook page.

“I No Longer Pray For Peace”

By Ann Weems

On the edge of war, one foot already in,

I no longer pray for peace:

I pray for miracles.

I pray that stone hearts will turn

to tenderheartedness,

and evil intentions will turn

to mercifulness,

and all the soldiers already deployed

will be snatched out of harm's way,

and the whole world will be

astounded onto its knees.

I pray that all the "God talk"

will take bones,

and stand up and shed

its cloak of faithlessness,

and walk again in its powerful truth.

I pray that the whole world might

sit down together and share

its bread and its wine.

Some say there is no hope,

but then I've always applauded the holy fools

who never seem to give up on

the scandalousness of our faith:

that we are loved by God......

that we can truly love one another.

I no longer pray for peace:

I pray for miracles.

- Poem by Ann Weems

From John Roedel,

I can’t make the

world be peaceful

I can’t stall tanks

from roaring down roads

I can’t prevent children

from having to hide in bunkers

I can’t convince the news to

stop turning war into a video game

I can’t silence the sound of bombs

tearing neighborhoods apart

I can’t turn a guided missile

into a bouquet of flowers

I can’t make a warmonger

have an ounce of empathy

I can’t convince ambassadors

to quit playing truth or dare

I can’t deflect a sniper’s bullet

from turning a wife into a widow

I can’t stave off a country being

reduced to ash and rubble

I can’t do any of that

the only thing I can do

is love the next person I encounter

without any conditions or strings

to love my neighbor

so fearlessly that

it starts a ripple

that stretches from

one horizon to the next

I can’t force peace

on the world

but I can become a force

of peace in the world

because

sometimes all it takes

is a single lit candle

in the darkness

to start a movement

“Lord, make me a candle

of comfort in this world

let me burn with peace”

~ john roedel

I’m grateful to John Roedel and for Ann Weems this week, because I have been at a loss for words. And yet, I have sat with scripture . . . There are different kinds of brilliance, different kinds of brightness that are too bright for us to see, at least now. We have a lot of remaking of ourselves to do, and in this we may remember the people of Israel, who hid their eyes from Moses’ face after he had gone to the mountain and received God’s law. We may be inclined with them to make idols of gold where God’s and human love would be enough if we gave it a chance. We may be afraid like them, to keep moving when our faith asks us to be peace in new ways, even maybe in new lands. We may find ourselves like Peter, who would seize the moment in concrete ways when he has a glimpse of what could be, of God’s love and God’s revealing on earth as it is in heaven. We may drop to our knees in disbelief and wonder, and we may pray to have a moment fixed in time.

There is no room for pontification, no room for rumination in these days, only room for prayers and tears, each one fervent, the drops gathering weight as they roll. And there is room for action: for letter writing, for sign making, for phone calling, for check writing, for uniting voices in song, for hugging when we need another’s strength.

My daughter called me yesterday, wondering what we are doing here at our church, to make ready for refugees fleeing Ukraine. I sighed to tell her that we are actively working to help pave the way for humanitarian parole for immigrants from Afghanistan. The enormity of what we had said hit us both, and we were quiet for a moment together. “When will we ever learn” that each person is of equal value and that what we call a nation’s resources are God’s gift to humanity. How will we steward these resources so that we protect the earth and all its inhabitants?

In Luke’s version of this story of transfiguration, after seeing and hearing a powerful glimpse of God, Jesus’ disciples walk down the mountain and do not say a word about what they *now know to be true.* Jesus has been transfigured and has been named as God’s beloved son. How, now, will each of us be transfigured by our faith and how will we go about the everyday business of being peace and bringing peace? Please welcome to your email inboxes a note this Monday with resources regarding where you may share your wealth—of time, of energy, and of money—with those who desire peace in their homes and a transfiguration of turmoil into calm.

The world is aflame; let your life be on fire. Amen.