



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As you may know, today, the last Sunday before Lent begins, is commonly known as Transfiguration Sunday. It's a majestic Sunday when the great epiphany of who this Jesus is is finally and fully revealed to us. When Jesus goes up on a mountain and God Incarnate shines as bright as the sun, and His disciples fall to the ground, thus completing the full revelation of the One who came to us as a baby in a manger, and then the One who came to the river Jordan to be baptized by John and to have the heavens ripped apart and the Holy Spirit descend on Him. And the One who went around preaching to all the people that the meek will inherit the earth, and the One who went and healed people and casted out demons and raised people from the dead.

It is this man who climbs up a mountain and His disciples see that He is suddenly changed right in front of their eyes. So there can be no question who this Jesus is. He is the Messiah. He is the one who has come to save us. And the church believes that the transfiguration of Jesus should inspire awe in you. It is meant to show you that this is not just some radical revolutionary from backwater Nazareth trying to affect the world. This is the real deal. This is the one who has come to change the whole world. The transfiguration of Jesus is meant to impress you. That this magnificent God is not to be trifled with, not to be played with, not to be ignored or disobeyed.

This is like when Moses goes up to the mountain, in that Exodus passage that we heard, and gets the commandments of God. All the people down at the bottom of the mountain, when they look up, what do they see? A fiery inferno, a devouring fire, a frightening and powerful manifestation of the glory of God. I often feel like these manifestations of God are meant to keep things right sized, because we humans, we contend to think pretty highly of ourselves and we think we have power beyond our imagining. And these visions and these glimpses of this massively invincible God are a reminder to reduce ourselves to the right size. Namely, we are insignificant. We are small stuff compared to the One who made all the things go in this world.

Now I have spent 20 some years contemplating the story of the Transfiguration because like the birth of Jesus, like the crucifixion of Jesus, and like the resurrection of Jesus, it shows up every year in the church calendar. So every year we got to go up that mountain. Every year we got to see with the disciples,

this terrifying transformation of Jesus. And every year we have to come to terms with the vision that is meant to remind us who Jesus is. He is the one who hangs with the prophets that were chosen by God. And God's booming voice comes and shakes the mountain top. This is my Son, my beloved, listen to Him, and the disciples fall to the ground in fear.

But honestly, I am not sure that the transfiguration does its job on me. I'm really not in awe of Jesus because of the spectacle. I mean, you know what takes my breath away? When the most powerful God becomes this little tiny infant and human beings have to take care of Him. You know what puts me in awe is when the most amazing God is hanging on a cross, helpless and powerless, and does not do anything to save Himself, but goes to death. That takes my breath away. But the transfiguration, it doesn't really have any power over me until this year. What is different this year is that a couple of things happened that will forever shape the way that I see Jesus on that mountain.

First, I had a conversation with two people this week. One was with a parishioner who is a Michigan State instructor. And she called me and told me that she was praying so that she can figure out how to go to school tomorrow, when they're all supposed to come back and have classes. And she decided that she actually needed to go to Michigan State today. So she's going to go today and she's going to walk the halls and she's going to reclaim the space in her classroom. She's going to welcome Jesus back into the space and trust that it's going to be His amazing love that's going to take care of all the students when they gather. And it's going to be His amazing love that's going to give her everything she needs to be able to be there as well.

And she decided on Monday, that is a must thing that she has to do. She must have pizza and pop because then everyone can be open to wherever the spirit leads them. In short, she is going to allow love to show her the way. And I wholeheartedly supported her vision. It is only love. It is only God's love for these children, God's love for this teacher, and their love for one another that is going to make tomorrow a holy and sacred day.

The other conversation I had was with my husband, who is actually currently on the campus of Michigan State University. He's there with a couple of high school students from his school for a conference called Michigan Youth in Government. They made the decision on Wednesday to go forward with the conference on Thursday, and on Thursday, almost 600 high school students from all over Michigan went to Michigan State for this yearly conference.

Troy said to me that the high school students have been amazing. They are caring for each other. They're building each other up. They're thanking the FBI agents and the law enforcement officers who are staying in the same place as they are. They're reminding themselves through speeches and through talks that

they actually have the power to be resilient in their hope in these very circumstances.

He told me he saw Jesus' power all over the place. It was transforming the space through the way people were showing compassion for one another, their expressions of love for each other, through the laughter and the silliness. I mean, they are high school students. They are utterly silly. And so they were taking care of each other through these normal acts of being human. And I thought, wow, it's the children who know how to reclaim places of pain and pour out their humanity on it to make it a place of life again.

Both of these conversations, they reminded me of the transfiguring power of Jesus. This is where Jesus shines. This is where He takes our lives, filled with difficulty, tragedy, and terror, and gives us love. The simple acts of loving each other so that we can overcome the things in the world that haunt us. Could it be that when those disciples went up that mountain, when they saw Jesus shine, it wasn't the blinding glory that was meant to instill fear and awe in them. What they actually witnessed was the profound love Jesus has for the whole entire world, and it was made so clear that His face lit up. And you know what? They couldn't help but recognize it because that's the same way we look when we love one another. This is what humans do. We care for each other and our faces shine. When we try to help each other through the rough times, our faces shine.

We are inhuman when we refuse to love one another, and that's when it hit me. I've had it backwards this whole entire time. On Transfiguration Sunday, what we witness is not Jesus' divinity shining through His humanity. We are actually witnessing Jesus' full humanity revealed on that mountain because His face is shining, because he loves us, because that's what we human beings do. We love. His face shone with an unquenching love for us. Just as those faces of those high school students are shining bright this weekend, just as those Michigan State students who are going back today are going to be shining bright as they hug each other, as they care for each other, as they text each other, as they take care of each other, just as that Michigan State professor, her face will shine as well on Monday when she brings pizza and pop.

When we love each other, our face is as bright as the sun, which brings me to the second event that made transfiguration different for me. One of my favorite bands is Airborne Toxic Event. Airborne Toxic Event, they're an indie rock band out of LA. And I have a couple of their albums on CD that had been in heavy rotation in my car where I had a CD player for years. But then I got this new car and there's no CD player, so my family introduced me to Spotify. And that's a music streaming service. And then I recently discovered on Spotify that if you really, really, really like a band like Airborne Toxic Event, they actually make

these channels that say Airborne Toxic Event. And then you can listen to it and you can hear songs that you know and you love, and songs that you may not know.

And so I was heading home one day in my car and I had my Airborne Toxic Event channel on, and I heard this song I had never heard from them before. It was beautiful. It was a live piece that they did at a concert. And it wasn't an original song, it was a cover, but the Lee vocalist introduced the song. And he said that the song was dedicated to his grandma who was actually supposed to be at the concert, but she died the week before.

And so he told a story of the last time he saw her and he went to go visit with her. And she said to him, would you please play me a song? But not one of those Airborne songs, with the jumping and the screaming . And so he played this beautiful song for her called The Book of Love. And she adored it. And I can understand why. The first verse goes like this:

The book of love is long and boring
No one can lift the damn thing
It's full of charts and facts, and figures
And instructions for dancing

But I
I love it when you read to me.
And you
You can read me anything.

It's a beautiful vision for what love looks like, a complete acceptance of the offering that you're receiving from the person you love and whom you love. When I got home, I made Troy listen to the song and I sang it to him. It's a love song. And he immediately told me, Manisha, that is not sung by Airborne Toxic Event. It's a song by the Magnetic Fields. And this is why I love my husband, because he knows weird indie bands like nobody else. But it didn't stop me. I still karaoked the song to him, and he laughed at me.

To me, it's a beautiful love song because it captures best the understanding of what love looks like. Love makes the most simple acts, like reading to each other, or singing for someone, or showing kindness for them, or praying for each other, or offering hugs, or cheering each other on, or being silly with one another, or eating pizza together. Love makes those simple acts life giving. It is how we will all hold our humanity when we are faced with evil that will constantly threaten our lives.

And I began to think if Jesus loves us, just like we humans love one another, could Jesus sing this song to us? Because Jesus knows exactly what it's like to be

human. So on this Transfiguration Sunday, when Jesus shines because of the unquenching love He has for you, I would like to present to you a love song from Jesus to you. I am deeply honored to present to you the incomparable Jill Jack on guitar and vocals, and the magnificent Sonia Lee on violin. This is the Book of Love.

The book of love is long and boring
No one can lift the damn thing
It's full of charts and facts, and figures
And instructions for dancing

But I
I love it when you read to me
And you
You can read me anything.

The book of love has music in it
In fact that's where music comes from
Some of it's just transcendental
Some of it's just really dumb

But I
I love it when you sing to me
And you
You can sing me anything

The book of love is long and boring
And written very long ago
It's full of flowers and heart-shaped boxes
And things we're all too young to know

But I
I love it when you give me things
And you
You want to give me everything

And I
I love it when you give me things
And you
You want to give me everything

And I
I love it when you give me things
And you

You want to give me everything

You want to give me everything