

Rev. Lacey Hunter
Community Church of Sebastopol
Transfiguration/Valentines Sunday
February 14, 2021
Text: Mark 9: 2-9

As we enter into today's sermon, I first want to offer some context for where this sermon emerged. The transfiguration wisdom that "God is Change" comes from afro-futurist, visionary fiction writer, Octavia E. Butler. Butler is understood to be the first afro-futurist writer and her sacred text *The Parable of the Sower*, written in 1993, is an active visionary force in shaping and reshaping the world for freedom. *Parable of the Sower* tells the story of Lauren Olamina, a young woman working to survive, heal and transform the world amidst climate disasters, pandemics, and violent, racist economic systems. Through her journey, Lauren crafts this understanding of God:

All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.

God
Is Change.

In honor and celebration of Butler's prophetic words, a question before us this Transfiguration/Valentine's Day is: If God is Change and God is Love, then how is Love Change? And how will this love lead us back down the mountain for the changing and loving of the world?

Let us pray. God of Change, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each and every one of our hearts be a love letter for a hurting, changing, dazzling world. Amen.

Dear Beloveds,

There is a glorious love story emerging on this high mountain. Sometimes love is dazzling like becoming part of the light of the world, sometimes love is change like breathing in the truth that darkness reveals, sometimes love is God, sometimes God is Change. And God was transfigured before them.

God became flesh and dwelt among us, as if God was saying, “My love cannot get close enough to you, so I will change into you, will shape you and be shaped by you.”¹ What of God’s changing love-shape did the disciples encounter in Jesus, so much so that they dropped their fishing nets to begin a new economy with God? So much so that they followed Jesus, step by step, up this high mountain?

God became flesh and dwelt among us. Even before Jesus was transfigured Jesus dazzled. And isn’t that love sometimes? The dazzling journey of becoming. The ways we discover how our bodies and spirits and hearts were meant to be pliable and porous, shaped by love for the communion of all love. Wasn’t it God’s love-shape that said, “Take, eat, this is my body. Take, drink, this is my life poured out for you.” And wasn’t it the changing shape of this love that eventually called the disciples and calls us today, to go and do likewise, to turn the world upside-down for love. Sometimes love transfigures us, changes the shape of us so much that we become part of the dazzling light.

Dear Beloveds,

Sometimes this love, like falling for the first time or all over again, is terrifying, like the whole of yourself rushing back to you—your guards dropped, wounds open, hopes floating on the service in an unknown world. Sometime love is the terrifying feeling of God alive inside of you, like the whole world breathing now from one lung. Have you caught your breath yet? Checked in with your senses?

Some say the disciples were afraid and Jesus held them because he remembered the ways water held him and called him by name. The ways he carried the wilderness with him and how with and in and of the wilderness, Jesus felt himself as a part of everything. In the disciples’ desire for dwelling—in the cry of the disciples to stay and build homes, did Jesus hear the world’s cry to hold fast to and behold God’s face?

What is it we turn to, cling to, in times of change? When fear rushes in? When amazement? When possibility? What of the past do we cling to, fearing what love

¹ Inspired by Octavia E. Butler’s sacred texts *Earthseed: The Books of the Living* (from *Parable of the Sower*)

will require of us, how love will change us? And what of the past can we call upon to loosen the fear of change? Sometimes love is about how we come together amidst our fears, to share the legacies of our ancestors and our histories and the hopes we carry forward. Sometimes love is the transmission of the prophets, their not-in-the-past visions stuck on some mountaintop but breathing now, from one lung, expanding and changing when exposed to air, when exposed to love. Sometimes love transfigures us, changes the shape of us so much that we begin to know freedom.

Dear Beloveds,

Sometimes love is about knowing the divine that's within, about not letting the world forget how Beloved we all are. Can you feel your belovedness enveloping you like a dark cloud, the water particles of you the same as the fog breathing your inhale the same as the water of the stars your exhale. How do we come to trust that what we need is here, inside of us, not needing to go back or cling to God but ready to take on the Change of God? How do we practice moving love, growing love, widening the spaces for changing love? How do we learn to share and disperse love rather than own love?²

I do not come to you this Valentine's Day with the red and pink of capitalist love but the red and pink of beloved porous tissue, muscles, flowing veins that cannot be hidden away or owned. Saint Valentine ministered to those locked away in prisons. Sometimes love is #CareNotCages, the persistence of freedom. God became flesh and dwelt among us, like a revolutionary love letter sent between bars a reminder that no body is throw-awayable.³ Can you perceive it, "Beloved," like a truth rising up from the deep dark ready to release the clinging, the bars, the cages, here to draw the truth of our histories and ancestors and prophecies into ourselves for the work of going forth, carrying on, coming down, together. Sometimes love transfigures us, changes the shape of us so much that we become part of the overshadowing that reveals God's glory.

Dear Beloveds,

This glorious love story is not meant to stay atop mountains, not meant to dwell solely within sacred walls or cling to a moment in time. This love story began with

² Black pleasure activist/healer/writer/emergent strategist Adrienne Marie Brown invites us to break and outgrow capitalist-socialized means of love by falling in love from a place of loving ourselves, looking for love with others as a place to keep growing.

³ #prisonabolition #abolitionisbelovedwork

a name—Beloved, called up from changing waters to make a practice, a way of wilderness. Now dazzling and dark, adapting and changing before us, Beloved is the way offered to us. These dwellings, not a fixed place but a moving, living, breathing God-thing.

Sometimes love is the calling out, the going forth, the descending from the high mountain, into the wilderness. These, our transfigured bodies like love letters from God. How have you been shaped by and shaped love? How has love changed you? On dazzling mountaintops and in overshadowing darkness, in awe, fear, confusion and joy, may we learn “to trust the growing part of [us],” the changing, loving parts of us, the transfiguring parts of us, “to lead [us] home.”⁴ Sometimes love transfigures us, changes the shape of us so much that we become part of the love of the world. May it be so. Amen.

⁴ *Undrowned* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs pg66