

This Love Changes Everything©

Mark 9:2-8

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Remember back, not very long ago, when we celebrated the wise men traveling to Bethlehem, following the star that led them to the Christ Child?

It is called The Epiphany – that time when we suddenly see something that is meaningful; we see it clearer than we had been able to before. When the wise men found Jesus they saw him and knew he was the one they had been searching for. And they fell to their knees and worshipped him.

And all the Sundays that have followed since that first Epiphany Sunday – right around January 6th – are called Sunday's in the Epiphany Season.

The story of the wise men was the first Epiphany. The story of Jesus' baptism and the dove, representing the Holy Spirit, and the voice of God proclaiming that "this is my Son, my beloved – that story is another epiphany story. It is another time of seeing Jesus as something more than just a human. We get a glimpse of his divinity.

Since then, we have seen early reports of Jesus healing, casting out demons, teaching in the synagogue with new authority – all of these epiphanies in their own way. That is, they gave us glimpses of Jesus – the Son of God.

As I was reading some of my resources, one of them called this Sunday – the story of the transfiguration – The Last Epiphany. And what an epiphany it was! What an amazing glimpse those three disciples were given up on that mountaintop with Jesus!

They went up there with Jesus, the man. But while they were there they witnessed a glimpse of Jesus, God's Son. They had an experience where they suddenly had a journey into the future where Jesus would be divine, full of glory.

I thought it was interesting though, that while the liturgical calendar might say that the Transfiguration of Jesus was the last Epiphany, there have been numerous other epiphanies as well.

I have been saying for the last several weeks that there would be an opportunity to share your faith story today. I have heard some wonderful stories recently – stories of how God's love in Jesus changed lives. Stories of how Jesus seemed clearer – more real – stories of epiphanies, from some of you!

This Lent, Pastor Shaun and I are using a resource called "This Love Changes Everything." I think you will find it to be helpful and hopefully we will see some epiphanies along the

40 day journey of Lent, making our way to Holy Week and finally to the celebration of Easter.

Today, I want us to hear some love stories of faith. What is your faith journey? How has Jesus been important in your life? And how has the church – the Body of Christ – made a difference for you?

Members share their stories of faith:

Lori Goldsmith shares her story

Tim Burns shares his story

Anyone else?

The thing is, I see epiphanies so often, right here among you – in the faces of the people of God; in the actions of present day disciples of Jesus – all of you and your love for one another and for those whom Christ loves. I hear about your transformations and I know the Holy Spirit is working in you.

I want to end this time by sharing with you this special surprise. It is a video Sara Pettit and I created for the fall retreat this past year. It doesn't include every single member because it would have been too long and we didn't have pictures of everyone, but we tried to include enough people to represent all ages of our church family.

I hope you will experience it with the love and joy that we had as we created it and that your hearts will swell up with gratitude for all the ways you see Christ here in this place.

Video of still photos of church members.

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