

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Last Sunday after the Epiphany

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;
Peace on each one who comes in joy.
Peace on each one who offers prayers;
Peace on each one who offers song.
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.

Opening Prayer

Spirit of energy, Spirit of change, in whose power Jesus is anointed to be the hope of the nations: pour yourself also upon us, without reserve or distinction, that we may have confidence and strength to plant your justice on the earth, through Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Gospel

Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Poem: "Lullaby"

by Louise Glück (b. 1943)

Time to rest now; you have had
enough excitement for the time being.
Twilight, then early evening. Fireflies
in the room, flickering here and there, here and there,
and summer's deep sweetness filling the open window.
Don't think of these things anymore.
Listen to my breathing, your own breathing
like the fireflies, each small breath
a flare in which the world appears.
I've sung to you long enough in the summer night.
I'll win you over in the end; the world can't give you
this sustained vision.
You must be taught to love me. Human beings must be taught to love
silence and darkness.

Meditation

In today's Gospel reading, Peter, James, and John witness Jesus's transfiguration on the mountain, a fittingly exalted moment for the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany. Until now, the milestones in Jesus's life have been related to his humanity, and to the material world: his birth in the smelly stable, his baptism, his miracles related to wine, illness, and death. But this is something else entirely, and perhaps the first time that Jesus's divinity is made apparent not through his words or his actions, but through his physical appearance. This is God as radiance, as beauty, as sublime light.

Today's poem, a lullaby from the words of a motherly God, reminds us that we can't dwell in those moments forever, and that in order to love fully, and to love God fully, we must carry those sublime moments with us into the silence, into the darkness. We might consider the poem as a post-Transfiguration "cool down" session, bringing us back down to earth, down from the mountain, and back into our bodies and our dirty, messy lives. The challenge and the promise, then, is that we can find beauty, radiance, sublime light and God even in the mess.

Questions for Reflection

- What images from the Gospel reading resonate the most for you today?
- What images from the poem strike you most?
- Think of the most sublime or radiant experience you have had. Where was God present in that moment?
- Where do you see God's presence in the most humdrum, banal aspects of your life?
- The Transfiguration has been rendered artistically by many. Explore the images below. What is your favorite? Why?

Prayers

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

Poem and Reflection offered by: Matt Bentley