

Changing Our Direction

Scripture

Matthew 17: 1-9

The Transfiguration

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

(New International Version)

Jesus Take the Wheel

She was driving last Friday on
her way to Cincinnati
On a snow white Christmas Eve
Going home to see her Mama and
her Daddy with the baby in the
backseat
Fifty miles to go and she was
running low on faith and gasoline
It'd been a long hard year
She had a lot on her mind and
she didn't pay attention

she was going way too fast
Before she knew it she was
spinning on a thin black sheet of
glass
She saw both their lives flash
before her eyes
She didn't even have time to cry
She was sooo scared
She threw her hands up in the
air

Jesus take the wheel
Take it from my hands
Cause I can't do this on my own
I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
To save me from this road I'm on
Jesus take the wheel

It was still getting colder when
she made it to the shoulder
And the car came to a stop
She cried when she saw that
baby in the backseat sleeping
like a rock
And for the first time in a long
time
She bowed her head to pray
She said I'm sorry for the way
I've been living my life
I know I've got to change
So from now on tonight

Jesus take the wheel
Take it from my hands
Cause I can't do this on my own
I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
To save me from this road I'm on

Oh, Jesus take the wheel
Oh, I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
Save me from this road I'm on
From this road I'm on
Jesus take the wheel
Oh, take it, take it from me
Oh, why, oh

Big Idea: Change ... allowing God to change the direction of our lives.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday.

Some of you are probably wondering: What the heck is a transfiguration?

It is understood to be a radical change in appearance or a metamorphosis.

A caterpillar which changes into a butterfly.

An ugly duckling that becomes a swan.

A person who listens to Don Shula on Television and loses 80 pounds in four months.

It has been six days since Jesus and Peter had a sharp dispute over the nature of Jesus mission on earth. Jesus revealed to Peter that he would go to Jerusalem to be crucified and Peter questioning that. You have to wonder what those six days may have been like, with Jesus accusing Peter of being Satanic in his lack of understanding.

But they must have kissed and made up, because Jesus selects Peter along with two of his other key disciples to accompany him to a place of change.

They go to a high mountain.

You might hear the words high mountain and be transported to Exodus where Moses has a number of encounters with God.

It is near a high mountain that Moses experiences God in the burning Bush.

It is on the high mountain that Moses is given God's word for his people.

It is also on the high mountain that Moses has an encounter with God so intense that he has to have a covering put over him, otherwise he would blind all those around once he has come down from the mountain.

It is on a high mountain that Moses looks into the Promised Land, knowing that the people will get there, but he will not.

A high mountain might conjure images of: call, commandment, communion, and closure.

Matthew also uses a mountain as the place where Jesus gives the disciples a new clarification of God's word – the Sermon on the Mount.

And like Moses in Exodus – Jesus is changed in outward appearance. Matthew says he is “transfigured” and to make the Moses connection clear, we are told that Jesus shines like the Sun ... Moses was blinding in his own appearance to the Israelites after his face to rear encounter with God in Exodus.

And not only is Jesus changed in outward physical appearance, there is a change in who is there: Moses and Elijah.

Moses reminds us of God's Law, and Elijah reminds us of God's prophets, and when Peter would retell the story in his own words in 2 Peter 1, he reminds us that Jesus was part of the prophetic message – there is a fifth C word – Continuity ...

There is here in this passage echo of a Call by God, where we follow the Commandments of God, in Communion with God, seeking Closure in God's mission within a framework of Continuity in God's word that calls us to a Change in our own journey.

And like many of us when we get a call from God, we are confused ... I wonder if Peter's confusion is part of what we need to take from this event – but if confusion is part of it, God's voice intercedes and offers confirmation: This is my son, listen to him.

Carrie tells a story of a young woman who is confused and ready to listen to God.

She was on her way to Cincinnati -- her dashboard shows two vital components of life as nearing empty: faith and fuel.

Not only has her trip been hard, the last eleven and a half months have been hard, and maybe getting to Cincinnati will turn all that around for her ...

If her faith and fuel are low, the dashboard for her may also be low in the area that says: funds. Does she have the funds to make it to Cincinnati ... we don't know.

But life events turn her around before she gets there ... and when she is turned around, our heroine gives up something many of us like to keep in our possession: control.

Jesus – I sit here on the side of this road, and I know I am heading down the wrong roads of life, so in order to get myself back on the correct path, I relinquish control of my life – here, you take it, and I will follow you instead of following my own preferences and desires

In order to make the change that will lead to answering God's call, within a framework of commandments, supported by community, which will lead to closure with God's plan for us, we must first ... give up control.

Here Jesus – here is the wheel, you drive.

It would be nice if Peter had been clearer in his understanding and said "I got it Jesus, my idea of direction is the wrong road, save me from the road I would have us on, and I give up control to you, here Jesus, you take the wheel.

Would it be nice if we took this day where the focus is on change, we acknowledged that in order to truly change, we must give up something almost sacred ... control.

This past Monday night in our Roman's class we talked about free will ... -- free will is about control ... and I think the biblical evidence is strong that God gives us a lot of free will – control over our lives ...

Carrie's heroine seems to believe she has a lot – I would suggest that we have a lot.

It is clear in the biblical narrative that Jesus is now focused on his journey to Jerusalem – his destiny with the Cross and Easter ...

For Jesus this wasn't as much of a change in direction, as it was his answer to God's call ...

Jesus suggests that part of making a change in direction in our ministry lives is letting God change us ... and not just a little ... we are talking industrial strength change here ...

Caterpillar to Butterfly kind of stuff ... It is indeed part of God's miracle in the creation that a Caterpillar passes through a Cocoon in order to come out later, changed into a butterfly ...

Jesus take the wheel
Take it from my hands
Cause I can't do this on my own
I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
To save me from this road I'm on

Oh, Jesus take the wheel
Oh, I'm letting go
So give me one more chance
Save me from this road I'm on

Jesus invites us to experience the continuity of this change in the direction of our lives by celebrating Communion – maybe that is the 7th C in this – Celebration ... Communion is in fact a celebration of the radical change God has made in our call to relationship with God as father within a context of living out his commandments ... (move to the celebration of Holy Communion).

This Sermon was delivered at Stratmoor Hills UMC in Colorado Springs on February 3, 2008. The copyright belongs to C. Dennis Shaw and dates from February 3, 2008.