

# WEST CENTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## The Pastor's Portion *Spiritual Nourishment for the Soul*

February 24, 2020

This Wednesday, Lent begins. This is a holy season, a season of sacrifice, a season of reflection and prayer, a season to draw you closer to God and to identify with this God/Man who gave up his position at the right hand of God to come to earth and show us how to be fully human, fully alive, fully loving, fully giving, fully concerned with the needs of the poor and the lost and left out. In this season, use these 40 days to remember why we are here together as the body of Christ. Called in this time to be the eyes and ears, hands and feet of a loving God. Use this time to honor the Divine within you and others. Use this time to imagine and envision what it is that God is calling us to be and to do. And let us be mindful of this treasure we have being the body of Christ in this place together. **So, spend time in prayer, silence, stillness and reflection.** And take care of yourselves and each other. This is the season of sacrifice. As we begin this journey, on Ash Wednesday begins our Holy Lenten season, feel free to come to the church. I will be here starting at about 11am until about 1:30 or 2 for anyone who wants prayer, ashes, or to talk about the Lenten journey or discuss any other matter you would like to speak to your pastor about.



Rev. Kris E Watson can be reached by e mail at [revkewatson3@gmail.com](mailto:revkewatson3@gmail.com)

Lenten Season is upon us.  
Take the **ALMIGHTY JOURNEY OF FAITH:**

**40 DAYS OF PRAYER, MEDITATION AND HEALTHY EATING**

During this Lenten Season starting with the first Sunday of March we will be engaged in the public **READING OF THE BIBLE** in the Sanctuary from **10:45-11:00 AM**. We will begin with the Gospel of Mark.

**1:00 pm COFFEE & CONVERSATION WITH PASTOR KRIS**

An informal Study of the Lord's prayer. A time to share and ask questions.



Image above created for West Center Church by Jeremy Tressler. Please thank him for the gift of his talent to help West Center reach out to the community.

**West Center Church seeks to worship the Living God, being Led by the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of Jesus in justice, peace simplicity and unity.**

### Weekly Inspiration: Letters to the Church by Francis Chan.

**"If prayer isn't vital for your church, then your church isn't vital.** This statement may be bold, but I believe it's true. **If you can accomplish your church's mission without daily, passionate prayer, then your mission is insufficient, and your church is irrelevant.** The early church devoted themselves to prayer. They knew they couldn't exist without it. If God didn't come through, they could never fulfill the mission He had given them. So, they were constantly on their knees together."

**"In our impatient culture, we want to experience biblical awe without biblical devotion.** At the core of our dysfunction is not necessarily style or structure but lack of devotion."

**"We're not doing people any favors by pretending they are the center of the universe. Either people will be awed by the sacred or they will not. If the sacred is not enough, then it is clear that the Spirit has not done a work in their lives."**

**"I agree with the poignant words of A. W. Tozer when he wrote, "Our most pressing obligation today is to do all in our power to obtain a revival that will result in a reformed, revitalized, purified church. It is of far greater importance that we have better Christians than that we have more of them."**

# Transformed by Transfiguration

Matthew 17: 1-9 Message Bible

**Matthew 17** <sup>1-3</sup> Six days later, three of them saw that glory. Jesus took Peter and the brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light. Then they realized that Moses and Elijah were also there in deep conversation with him.

<sup>4</sup> **Peter broke in, “Master, this is a great moment! What would you think if I built three memorials here on the mountain—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah?”**

<sup>5</sup> While he was going on like this, babbling, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and sounding from deep in the cloud a voice: “This is my Son, marked by my love, focus of my delight. Listen to him.”

<sup>6-8</sup> When the disciples heard it, they fell flat on their faces, scared to death. But Jesus came over and touched them. “Don’t be afraid.” When they opened their eyes and looked around all they saw was Jesus, only Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. “Don’t breathe a word of what you’ve seen. After the Son of Man is raised from the dead, you are free to talk.”

Like most of the stories in the Bible, this text is sandwiched in between two others of equal importance, and which really sets in context the scene of this transfiguration story. Six days earlier, Jesus was with his disciples and he asked them a serious question, He wanted to know the opinion of the people. He said to them: Who do the people say I am? <sup>14</sup> They replied, “Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” <sup>15</sup> He pressed them, “And how about you? Who do you say I am?” <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter said, “You’re the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus, seeing that God had revealed to Peter his true identity, Jesus told Peter that he was renaming him from Simon to Peter, and upon the rock of Peter, he would build the church. Six days pass, and Jesus takes his inner circle up a mountain (here we go with this mountain climbing again.)

When they got there, this is what they saw: Jesus’ appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light. Then they realized that Moses and Elijah were also there in deep conversation with him.

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I wish I could tell you about all the moments that I have witnessed God’s glory. Moments that God has revealed to me the sheer power and majesty of God. Sometimes these experiences have been other worldly, other times, they have been seemingly ordinary. But not ordinary. There have been church services I have been in when you could feel the sheer power and the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Where the people were in such high worship that you could feel God’s delight. A service where the sanctuary was filled to capacity with people of all races, nationalities, ethnicities and from all walks of life. This to me this represents God’s beloved community. A true representation of all God could and wants to do with the church. Open doors, a variety of people, music, worship styles; wonderful hospitality and the good news being shared. What a glimpse of God’s glory! What an experience! And of course, the desire is to find ways to re-create this experience every Sunday. I wanted to tell people, come back tomorrow, and the next day and the day after that can we just do this every back and let’s do this every Sunday all over again, and again and again. But of course, they did not all come back the next day.

Have you had such days? Maybe it was your wedding day, maybe it was the day your child graduated, maybe it was the day you closed a lucrative deal or got a windfall. You know, those days that you saw the glory of God manifested in your life, where you saw the face of God, perhaps in your newborn child, or a rainbow or a scene from nature?

This must have been the experience of Peter James and John. Especially Peter who seemed to be the most fierce advocate for Jesus. After seeing Jesus in all of his glory, Peter did what everyone should want to do. Lord, it is good that we should be here with Elijah and Moses. Let me build us a few houses so we can stay right here!

I mean, look at what Peter and the others had come from: they climbed a mountain leaving behind poverty, desperation, hunger, depression, illness, oppression, anxiety, fear, and so much more...and they climbed up with Jesus to witness the true Divine nature of his being. They witnessed him in all his glory. Lord, it is good that we should stay here! But they wanted to build a monument to a moment. It is good that things should stay JUST LIKE THIS! Don't move an inch, don't change a thing! Let's just stay right here.

All of us have had those glorious moments of bliss, God wink moments when we thought everything was going right, where we could see God's glory on full display, and we really wish it could last forever. But, alas, we cannot stay there. After such moments, we have to go back down the mountain and face some hard realities: We have to face the reality of change, change in our bodies, change in our lives, change in our perspective. We have to face opposition, and disagreement. We have to face the reality of suffering and death, we have to face the reality that people will not like us, will not listen to us, will compare and judge us, will not want to follow the way or the course we have envisioned. We have to face the mundane problems of our own lives, the suffering of others: their deep needs: the fact that we have to go back to a drudgery job, or our empty houses, our lonely lives or our devastating illness. We have to actually live out this life with all of its vagaries, as uncomfortable as that is---until we die.

For those who have seen a glimpse of the glory of God, this is our struggle. This our challenge. We are called to a life that is mostly mundane with momentary highs. Even when you look at the church year: Advent, Epiphany to Lent, resurrection, then Pentecost....and then Ordinary time, and it is ordinary. But we love the high holy seasons the best. 6 months of highs and 6 months of ordinary time. But we love the highs. We prefer the momentary glimpses of glory.

So, we have to deal with the struggle of coming down off the high mountains and follow a poor carpenter who has a deep spiritual and radical message. And it is hard when you live in the world. I would say that if you are not struggling with following Jesus, and if you are not struggling with the fact that Jesus calls us away from our comfort zones and our high moments to wrestle with the hard realities of the world that distract us and lure us away from a God focused life, then perhaps you may want to consider taking a closer look at this Jesus we say we follow.

Even Jesus, being in the presence of God, the Holy Spirit and the great prophets of old, even Jesus came down off of the mountain to do what? To heal and to set captives free and to love and to teach and to minister to his people. Jesus came, and he down from glory to earth to get in trouble with the religious leaders and the Roman Empire. Jesus came down off of that mountain KNOWING he was going to his death, knowing what trouble he would be facing. And trust me, you are not going to be crucified because you are sweet and kind and loving and

everyone likes you. Nope, Jesus is a problem for the powers that be, for the status quo, for the elite and the rich rulers of his time!

Yes, here is a God man with immense power--- the earthly vessel of the Spirit of a powerful God and he comes preaching to the lowest of the low, telling them that they are Blessed. He comes KNOWING who he is and willing to experience persecution for the sake of a message that ran counter to the status quo—a message with so much power and truth that it survives to this day!

When we follow Jesus, we experience discomfort because we see and live in the world that STILL goes counter to the message he taught. And Jesus tells us to be in the world, but not of the world, which means we have to place a higher priority on what he says than on what the world says, while still navigating this world.

And the world tells us that we are NOT ok unless we are living well, healthy all the time, in a relationship with hearts and flowers, bank accounts filled to the brim, 2.5 kids with cars in the driveway. The world tells us we are only ok if we have things, and fun and ease and comfort.

Yet our lives, and the lives of others we know are not perfect. We see around us depression, anxiety, illness, loneliness, and so much more. Around us, and on the news, we see in the world deep poverty, and hunger and homelessness, and hatred. We are assaulted daily with the atrocities of a world gone mad with a mind made false sense of self that has convinced everyone, or nearly everyone that it's all about our comfort. And we want nothing more than to be comfortable.

But how can we be comfortable when know there is suffering and pain in the world, and in our own lives? We would much prefer the moments of glory and rapture that being in the pure presence of God affords us. But alas, we have to come down off the mountain.

So, then the disciples go down off the mountain and what happens, they are approached by a man who has a son tortured by demons, and the man had asked the disciples to heal him, but they cannot. So, seeing Jesus come off the mountain the man brings his son directly to Jesus. And Jesus healed the boy.

<sup>19</sup> When the disciples had Jesus off to themselves, they asked, "Why couldn't we throw it out?"

<sup>20</sup> **"Because you're not yet taking God seriously," said Jesus. "The simple truth is that if you had a mere kernel of faith, a poppy seed, say, you would tell this mountain, 'Move!' and it would move. There is nothing you wouldn't be able to tackle."**

And that is how we can be comfortable, and experience deep peace!: by taking God seriously and putting our trust and faith in a God who promises us that God will always be with us, that God will never leave or forsake us, that even through the pain, even through the trials, even through discomfort, **God is there in the midst of it all.** We can be comforted because we have seen and we have experienced those moments of the true glory of God. And it is good...and we are assured that in God's presence there is unimaginable light and love and life. **We have this good news...this gospel message so that we will have hope of things eternal and everlasting.** And that eternal thing is the love of God. It is with us now and shall be forever more. Thanks be to God.

Our call is to be transformed by those moments of transfiguration. When we see God's glory, let's use those moments, as fleeting as they are, as inspiration for inspiring in us a faith that KNOWS, and is certain that God is with us, that God is promising us a life of love and light, and

that if we are faithful and if we stand in the power God has given us, when all is said and done we will live in the transfigured light filled world of the eternal life with God.

So today, I urge you to discover again who this Jesus really is: A God/Man who is more than just a prophet, but truly one who manifested the power of God by accessing his Divine identity and using the power of God as the Son of God to heal, who walked with others through their pain and suffering, to love the unlovable and dream the impossible. This is our mission. This is our mandate.

### West Center Congregational Monthly Church Calendar

- February African-American History Month  
AA Heritage Moments during Service **Commemorating 400 + Years of Africans in America: 1619-2019**
- 26 Pastor Kris available to pray, impose ashes and give counseling 11::05-2pm. Lenten Almighty Journey of Faith begins.
- 28 Rev. Kris Training a group of Climate Activists in the Lounge 9am-5p through (not open to the public)
- 29
- March **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**
- 1 **COMMUNION SUNDAY**
- 8 Daylight Savings Begins
- 13-14 Rev. Kris to train a church in Rochester in Racial Reconciliation
- 15 **Deacons Meeting**
- 19: **Town Hall with Mike Khader 6:30-7:45PM**
- 27: **Salon Style Potluck Meal, Music and Musings with Friends of Jeremy**