

Children’s Moment

Happy Valentine’s Day, girls and boys. Esperanza and I pray for you and your family. We love you and we appreciate you.

Today is a very special day. What day is it? That’s right, it’s Valentine’s Day! Today is a day when we tell and show other people how much we love them.

Esperanza and I love you and we appreciate each one of you and your families. So, guess what, we made you a Valentine’s Day card! How do you like it? Maybe you can make one for your Mom & Dad later.

We wrote some of Jesus’ words in the card:

“Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love”
(John 15:12, MSG).

What is Jesus saying? He’s telling us that when we care for each other without trying to get anything out of it, that’s the best way to love. That’s how Jesus loves us.

You know when people say words but they don’t really mean them. Have you ever heard someone say “I’m sorry” but they really weren’t? Jesus wants us to really mean it when we say “I love you.” We don’t have to be afraid if it’s not deep or in a special place. When we tell someone we love them and really mean it, they know.

Best of all, you can tell someone you love them and show them how much you do without having to be there. You can make a card, blow someone a kiss, listen to a story, smile and laugh at someone’s bad joke. What’s most important is reaching out to touch someone, letting them know you care. That brings a smile to their face and to Jesus’ face.

I hope you have a wonderful Valentine’s Day.

Will you pray with me?

You are invited to be part of Sunday School online!

Visit us at www.coronaumc.com/childrensministry to sign up.

Message: "Listen to Him!"

"Listen to him!" The words ring out across the mountain top. And silence follows.

How would you respond if you heard something you struggle to understand, yet desperately need? God revealing Jesus is divine is exactly that. "Listen to Jesus" isn't exactly a message a lot of people want to hear ... then or now. And yet it's exactly what we need.

When you're faced with a sudden, shocking truth your response is usually to fight or flee. Our reactions are either confused or ... silent. We resist by trying to divert attention to something else. Or we avoid the truth, either with silence or deflection.

Today we're experiencing the intersection of two celebrations.

First, today is Valentine's Day. It's a day when we celebrate and show our love for the people who are closest to us; our family, friends and the significant person in our lives. We are thankful and grateful to have someone who loves us for who we are and who we can love in return.

The second celebration is much less well known. Today is Transfiguration Sunday. It's the day when we celebrate what was revealed on the mountain top so long ago: God is with us. Jesus is Immanuel, the one sent to redeem and save us.

At first glance, these two celebrations appear to collide and clash.

Yet, when we go deeper, I think we find the two aren't in conflict. Just as two facets on a diamond reflect light in a different way, these two celebrations reflect God's character and nature differently. The substance is the same. The way we see it is different.

Let's spend a few minutes exploring Mark's narrative together.

I invite you to get your Bible and open to the ninth chapter of Mark. We're jumping forward in time from our lessons of the last two weeks. Jesus has been with his followers for more than three years.

Jesus and the disciples are in Caesarea Philippi, which is a city in northern Galilee (Mark 8:27). It's located at the base of Mount Hermon, which is one of the traditional locations proposed for the mountain top trip. Jesus invites Peter, James and John – his inner circle,

to make the hike with him. It's not unusual. Jesus had a regular practice of making short trips to be alone and pray. This outing is different. The party travels up the mountain, but that's where the spiritual retreat ends.

We don't know exactly how, but when they arrive, something remarkable happens. Jesus changes in front of them. And his clothes become dazzling white. Not only that, but two very famous people – Elijah and Moses, appear. And they're talking to Jesus! It's like they know him. And, guess what, they do!

This is a jaw dropping experience. The disciples know Jesus is special. They've seen him do miraculous things – healing people, calming storms and feeding thousands. But this is far beyond the natural. It's a supernatural event.

How would Moses, who led the people out of Egypt to freedom, and Elijah, who defended God, resurrected people and ascended directly to heaven, know Jesus? After all, they disappeared from the scene more than a thousand years earlier. This strongly implies a pre-existing relationship, which could only happen if Jesus is truly God's Son, an eternal and everlasting member of the Trinity.

That's a mind-blowing, life-changing statement. Jesus is, in some mysterious way, more than a human being. Jesus is both human and divine. He's God veiled in flesh. That explains a lot, particularly how Jesus can do what he did, with the ability to back up his words with powerful, yet intimate, actions. What an amazing revelation!

Reflecting on Mark's narrative this week, I was struck by this duality, the revelation that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. There are only two moments in scripture when all three persons of God are present. The first is when Jesus was baptized. The second is when Jesus was transfigured. I believe these God moments are for us: they identify who Jesus is. That's significant. It's important for us to know, so we can answer the question "why follow him?" when others ask.

Jesus' identity is key. Jesus identifies with us through his birth, life and baptism. Jesus knows the human condition, after all, he is human. That's one aspect of who he is. Jesus is uniquely special, a one-of-a-kind person. Jesus identifies with God through his transfiguration,

authority and resurrection. Jesus knows what it means to embrace the supernatural, after all, Jesus is divine.

There's an intersection of our human reality with the transcendent, spiritual divinity that is God on the mountain top. Peter, James and John, Jesus' inner circle, were there to witness and later report it. It's good news, yet it goes far outside our comfort zone. They were shocked and startled by what was revealed: his sudden change, revealing a glimpse of his nature, veiled in human flesh. They're confused by Jesus' casual acquaintance with the heroes of their nation and faith. And they're silenced by the voice from the cloud affirming Jesus' identity and authority. I think one of the reasons it took so long to write the Gospel narratives is because it took a while for them to make sense out of what they experienced.

What does this mean to us today? Some might pass it off as fantasy; tired men in an unfamiliar setting who were fooled by voices on a foggy day. I truly believe there's something deeper, more meaningful that was experienced. God's true nature was revealed and it's hard for us to grasp. That's okay. God doesn't expect us to understand Jesus' nature or to be expert theologians. We don't just focus on the transfiguration.

What God wants is to be in a loving relationship with us. That's where Valentine's Day – and every day, comes in. Jesus loves us and wants us to love him in return, as a member of the family or parent. And, I don't know about you, but Esperanza and I are calling our parents today to talk to them. The great thing about a loving relationship is that when we talk, our loved ones listen. And when they talk, we listen.

God wants that kind of relationship with you and your household. So that leads to a question: Do you talk to God? Even more important, do you listen to God? Listening is something we all can be better at, but particularly when it comes to God.

God rarely speaks in the voice heard on the mountain top (some have those experiences, but most do not.) That's not a limitation or sign of a lack in our faith or status. I believe most people respond better when spoken to calmly and gently. God clearly knows that.

God’s voice is still and quiet, easy to miss. It can be drowned out by the noise of the world. God’s voice may be hard to hear if we are less open to spiritual presence. One of the things I’ve learned about depression is our hurt, illness or mental state can make us less sensitive to God’s presence. There’s a real sense that God is at a distance, when it’s really the other voices, our self-talk, that is dominating and competing for our attention.

I have good news, news of hope. God IS present, even when we are the ones who are absent or unable to hear clearly. Hear this: Jesus loves you. You are valued, loved and cared for just as you are! I hope you know God’s love and blessing every, single day.

I invite you to seek God’s presence, listen for God’s voice in the supernatural, on special occasions, during every day moments and, most of all, when you are in need. Turn to Jesus. He’s waiting to be revealed to you in unexpected ways that will change your life for the better.

God is always waiting to speak with us, listen to us and affirm our relationship. Embracing and listening to Jesus strengthens the bonds of our covenant, as persons within a community who love God, love our neighbor and love each another as Jesus loves us.

Happy Valentine’s Day. God bless you.

Several opportunities:

- **Ash Wednesday** (Feb. 17th) – begins season of Lent – 7:00 pm
Livestreaming online with FUMCOR – information is on church web site, in The Messenger or contact office.
- **“Transplanted”** worship series begins next Sunday
- **“Homemade Soup & the Soul”** – 5-weekly gatherings on Wednesday nights at 7:00 pm via ZOOM. Information is on church web site, The Messenger or contact us. All are welcome.
- **Receiving new members on Feb. 28th** – we will make a video of our Zoom reception and feature it. Please contact Pastor Eric if you are interested in joining at CoronaUMC@gmail.com

Mark 9:2-9 (CEB)

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good that we’re here. Let’s make three shrines - one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He said this because he didn’t know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, “This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!” Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human One had risen from the dead.