

Sun., June 21, Outdoor Worship

Forest Hills Church

Camping Sunday

Message: "Radiant Faces"

Memory Verse: "My heart says, 'Come, seek God's face.' Lord, I do seek your face!" -Psalm 27:8

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9

Blurb: This Sunday we're celebrating Camping Sunday! We need mountain-top experiences to sustain us in our discipleship. Although we can't physically go to camp this year, we are going to have a worship experience to meet God "on the mountain." Come this Sunday dressed like you're going to camp, and be ready to meet God. Worship will be outside, so bring a lawn chair and hat.

Prep: Set up outside in the tent.

Worship leaders are under the tent.

Rope off the fire pit area

People are invited to sit in lawn chairs, spacing 6 feet apart from other families.

People can also park facing the leaders tent and stay in their vehicles (turn off vehicles)

Fellowship hall door open for bathrooms.

Offering box available as people leave -Lynn

OPENING MUSIC: *God of Creation* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

Happy Father's Day!

Also, it's Camp Sunday! Normally Rev. Peter Milloy would be preaching here, and we would be getting ready to attend Red Rock Bible Camp for the week. Well, our United Methodist camps are all shut down this summer, and we cannot have Bible Camp. But, we are still having Camping Sunday! We are dressed like we do for camp. And we are engaging in worship, like for camp. And at the end of our worship service today, we are having an altar call, just like we do each day at camp.

Old Testament, the first worship center was a tent, called the Tent of Meeting, or Tabernacle. God's people gathered around and sung God's praises together. So, I declare this hour of worship to be a Tent Meeting. Let us gather in God's presence!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"My heart says, 'Come, seek God's face.' Lord, I do seek your face!" -Psalm 27:8

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify (acoustic)

Magnify

O Wondrous Sight! O Vision Fair

Simple Pursuit

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: “The Transfiguration” -Pastor Andrew

LOVE MOMENT: Supporting Camp - Money for scholarship 2021.

MESSAGE: “Radiant Faces” -Pastor David

When God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses, God called Moses up the mountain to meet with Him. There, God gave him the plan for His people to live well. And then, Exodus 34:29 says, “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.” Then in verse 33, “When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face” to shade its bright glowing.

It’s a major bummer to miss Red Rock Camp this year! Camp week is a highlight for us who can go, and for us all as a church. It’s a transformative time in not just our summers or for our routines, but transformative for our spiritual discipleship. In order to keep growing spiritually we need mountaintop experiences.

Camp is a mountaintop experience. We leave our normal schedules behind for a week, we get away from it all, to go spend with God, to reconnect with our true identity, to recharge for what we need to face ahead, to be renewed in joy, and to be refreshed in hope. Camp is a time to turn our faces away from the grind of our routine, and instead to set them toward God’s face. Then, we are made able to return back down to our lives, but now with glowing faces to live abundant lives.

I imagine you’re feeling like you could use a mountaintop experience right now, aren’t you? We’ve been “hanging in there,” “holing on” for the last three months. We been cooped up at home, unable to get out, so many fun experiences and opportunities have been cancelled, and are still being cancelled...like camp this summer. And we’ve shared what seems to have shrunk into *very tight quarters* with our loved ones, *and they* have grown more annoying and trying as the weeks go by! And then our world has erupted with the reactions to the older pandemic of racism. How we need to turn our faces toward God!

In the Bible, the stories of Jesus are filled with Him seeking out mountain top experiences. Jesus lived a pattern of healthy discipleship, and we see in Him the cadence of ongoing prayer times, weekly worship, and special times away from it all. We especially see Him doing it when things seem to go crazy, or He is needing to discern His life’s direction. When He was feeling the calling to leave home and begin His public ministry, He spent 40 days in the desert praying, seeking God’s face. Later, when He was at the height of His popularity, and the people wanted to make Him their king, Jesus quietly went off by Himself *up a mountain* to go discern His direction by seeking God’s face. When He was facing His crucifixion, He climbed the Mount of Olives to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I want us to take a closer look at another of Jesus’ mountain top experiences. He had been working exhaustingly, preaching and teaching, healing, sparing with Jewish leaders, and growing frustrated with His disciples who didn’t seem to grasp His larger purpose. He was sensing it was time to start heading to Jerusalem to face His crucifixion. And so, at this time of transition, Jesus again did what He usually did: He went mountain climbing. This time He took with Him three disciples: Peter, James and John.

Let’s take a look at Matthew 17, the first 9 verses. “1 After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There He was transfigured before them. *His face shone like the sun*, [does this make you recall Moses?]”

and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them [speaking of Moses,] Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

“4 Peter [is overwhelmed, and] 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.’

“5 While he was still speaking, a bright [radiant!] cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’ [What does that remind you of? That’s the same thing that happened when Jesus was baptized, remember?

Verse 6,] “When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ He said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

“9 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.’”

Jesus went up the mountain to remember who He was. Matthew said that He was “transfigured,” that His divine nature was displayed. He met with God the Father, and His face glowed. Moses and Elijah also appeared, for Jesus’s purpose was to fulfill all the Law and the prophets. He heard God proclaim over Him His true identity, regardless of what all the other voices claimed He was.

Isn’t it also cool that Jesus took three disciples with Him? Why? Well, He wanted them to see His example of how important it was to go up and seek God’s face. But He also wanted them to be transformed, too. It was at this moment that they began to really understand just who this Jesus was. Up until then, He had been their friend, their teacher, their inspiration. But on that mountain top, surrounded by the very presence of God Almighty in the bright cloud, who proclaimed that this Jesus, this friend of theirs, was none other than God’s own Son. So, they fell down on their faces in fear and worship. They were in the very presence of God! They got a clearer picture of who their Jesus was! This became a mountain top experience for the disciples, too!

And as a transfigurational experience, it was a time of defining who they were and what they were all about. Peter wanted to build three shelters—one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah—so they could all just stay there and hang out on that mountain. We can understand that, can’t we? He didn’t want to go back to the mess of the world! You and I face the same temptation. We might prefer to spend all our time away from the world, cloistered on the mountain top, safe above the rush of the everyday life. But that is not who we are and it is not what we are called to do. Jesus lifts the disciples up off the ground and leads them back down the mountain, back into the realities of life, back into a life of service, facing what lay ahead.

In 2001, Allison Levine led the first all-woman team to climb Mt. Everest. Allison is a particularly inspiring leader, because for much of her life she was unable to take on any physical challenges. Allison was born with a heart defect and could never play sports or rough-house like other kids her age. Any exertion could cause her heart to jump out of its regular rhythm. But then, at the age of 30, she had a surgery to repair her heart defect. She became a dedicated athlete.

Allison agreed to lead the Mt. Everest expedition with one stipulation: that the climb would be a fund-raising effort to raise money for good causes, like cancer research and for building a girls’ school in Nepal. She didn’t want to climb Everest for her own or the team’s glory; she wanted the team to give back something to others. She said, “What’s the point of [climbing the mountain] ~~taking such risks~~ if nothing changes on the earth below.”

Moses came back down to the people with a glowing face and led the people into God’s way of life. Jesus came down the mountain, and, as Luke said, “set His face toward Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51) When we meet God in mountain top experiences, we see who Jesus really is, we see who we

are made to be, and we then come back down the mountain different than when we go up. With a clearer picture of Jesus and ourselves, we are filled with God's radiance that makes us able to live differently back in the mess of our lives. We are transfigured, and we come back down to be agents of transfiguring our lives, our world, offering God's radiance to those around us.

Church, we need spiritual mountain top experiences! We cannot go to camp this year. We cannot go on our Study Tour to Ireland. Many of your experiences are not possible this summer. So, today, on Camping Sunday, I want to charge you with finding a creative way to go mountain climbing this summer! What can you do to have this kind of encounter?

First of all, I want to invite you to remote Red Rock Camp worship, via Zoom, next Sunday, June 28 at 7 p.m. We can't gather for the week, but we are going to gather for an hour of praise and prayer. The Zoom link will come out in the Wednesday email. But also, perhaps you can set aside a week, a few days, a weekend perhaps, to go reconnect with God. Re-imagine your summer vacation that just got cancelled! Perhaps you could take a road trip into God's creation. Perhaps you could go visit some mature Christians, or go hang with long-time Christian friends. Perhaps you could create a retreat for yourself...at a nearby cabin, or somewhere you normally just never get to. Perhaps you could commit to take up reading a book on spiritual well-being or discipleship. Perhaps you could plan to join the local mission week our church is planning in August, even for just a couple of days. Perhaps you could schedule a marriage enrichment retreat for the fall. Perhaps you could register for Faithfully Yours women's retreat in November. Perhaps you could sign up for the next Walk to Emmaus retreat. For sure, set aside this week next June for Camp 2021.

Take out your bulletin insert and write down what you will do this summer to go mountain climbing. How will you go seek God's face, so that your face can be changed? Make a plan. Your life down here on earth desperately needs it! You can't afford not to.

The second thing you can do is to commit to consistently participate in mini-mountain top experiences. Each Sunday morning worship is designed to be a time away with God. Yes, it's for only an hour, but it provides the life-breath you need to make it through what you're facing. Back in Exodus 34, after Moses came down the mountain, it says, verse 34, "Whenever Moses entered the Lord's presence to speak with Him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord." Ongoing mini-encounters with God sustain you for ongoing life. Jesus, the Bible says in Luke 4:16, went to weekly worship, "as was His custom." Or, as we've put it here at Forest Hills, our commitment is: if I'm in town, I'm in worship.

This year, our graduating class will always remember COVID-19 and the protests. When I graduated from high school in 1988, one of the dominant stories was Operation Breakthrough. Three grey whales stayed too long at their feeding grounds, and temperatures turned cold early. The ice froze over, and they were trapped near Barrow, on the north side of Alaska, six miles from open sea. Anyone remember this? An international effort arose to save the whales. At first they tried to break through the ice for the whales, but the jagged ice they created cut the whales badly. So, instead, rescuers cut a string of breathing holes about twenty yards apart in the six-inch-thick ice. "For eight days they coaxed the whales from one breathing hole to the next, mile after mile. Along the way, one of the trio vanished and was presumed dead. But finally, with the help of Russian icebreakers, the whales Putu and Siku swam to freedom."

Craig Brian Larson writes, "In a way, worship is a string of breathing holes the Lord provides His people. Battered and bruised in a world frozen over with greed, selfishness, hatred, and the

maddening rush of activity, we rise for air in [worship], a place to breathe again, to be loved and encouraged, rested, renewed, until that day when the Lord forever shatters the ice cap.”

That’s a great way of describing worship. Once every seven days we are to gather together in the presence of God to see Jesus better, and to come to remember our purpose and identity. Here we are transfigured as we bow down to worship Jesus, who then lifts us up and sets our glowing faces back toward our lives.

So, before we leave today, we’re going to do a little mountain climbing right here. We’re going to use the circle around the cross out here at the camp fire ring as our mountain top. We’re going to stop to see Jesus for who He really is: our personal friend and helper, but also the divine Son of God who has come to be our Lord and Savior. I invite you, if you want to come over and sit in this ring of worship, or stand facing the cross, and hear God’s voice ring in your ears, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!”

At camp, we have an altar call each day. So today, this will be our altar call. Our camp theme was to be “engaging our communities.” Think about your life, your family, your work, your community. In what ways does it need transfiguration? You, who are here looking at Jesus’ face, in what ways can you take this glow back into your community? What can you do to bring blessing?

You can stay in your seats if you like, or, if you prefer, you can physically move to the ring here as a way to go mountain climbing. Listen for God’s voice, “This is my Son, who I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” Then, ask God how you can take His radiance back into your communities. How can you be an agent of His transfiguration?

Write down what hear God saying to you, also in your bulletin, so you remember what you hear God saying about how you will take His glory back into your life.

There will be people here to pray with you if you want, about whatever you bring to Jesus. Let’s go mountain climbing!

PRAYERS: Altar call at the cross -David

Song: *Just As I Am* -Sanctify

CLOSING SONG: *Those Who Trust* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Offering: *Drop offerings in the box as you leave.*

June 28: Outdoor worship (bring lawn chairs!)

Teen Challenge!

July 5: Indoor worship - Need message suggestions! FAQs - Answers from the facts of the Bible

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“My heart says, ‘Come, seek God’s face.’ Lord, I do seek your face!” -Psalm 27:8

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Pastor Andrew