

The Transforming Gaze

¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

¹⁸And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

The fifth Sunday of Lent is upon us, and we have been journeying together in this 40-day season of reflection of Jesus's desert time. Like Jesus, we often take up expressions of fasting, a discipline of managing and simplifying our needs to re-orient our focus on the glory of God, manifested through the Son, Jesus. Other disciplines: scripture reading, different practices of prayer, fellowship, and worship.

Here at FUMC, our theme has been, "Right here, right now." Paul shares in the verses what our Lenten journey is about. When we begin to re-orient our focus, through the spiritual disciplines we intentionally incorporate into our lives, we can see with 'unveiled faces' God's glory, and we are free to live a transformed life, in the image of God. Here, 'seeing,' is much more than looking. It is a 'gaze' at the expressions of God's glory. A soaking in, a contemplative presence. For me, it is the moments of when I am in nature, that I can gaze upon the magnificent of God's creation. Lent comes from the Old English word 'lencten', referring to lengthening of the days or springtime. It is through this Spring season that I (we) see new leaves being pushed out of the Live Oak trees. We hear the songs of the cardinals, and we search and find them perched high in the trees, reflecting the glory of its Creator. The large white flowers of the Chinese viburnums explode with brilliance. What are the invitations that these moments invite us to respond? New growth, boldness, rhythms of the seasons/life. Paul reminds us that only the Spirit of God, manifested through Jesus, the Christ, gives us the freedom to receive these reflections and can be transformed as living images of Jesus.

Prayer:

We give thanks God, for your living Spirit, that guides our paths to a transformative life in the image of Jesus. May the Spirit guide us to 'Be Still,' and know that you are our God. Allow us to gaze with the eyes of your heart and to reflect your glory in the world, 'Right here, right now.'

Prayer Practice: Encountering Nature (walking or sitting) – practicing the Presence.

Prepare your time by taking two minutes to sit or stand silently and begin noticing your breath. Notice your feet touching the ground, connecting to the earth. Begin your time by scanning your surroundings, near and far, above, and down. Perhaps 1 or 2 things may have caught your attention but continue to scan your surroundings. Scan a second time but allow yourself to spend time with that which caught your attention. What is it that caught your attention? Texture, color, shape, etc. Are there memories that surface? How or does may this image/object reflect God's creation or glory to you. Allow yourself as much time as you are lead. Perhaps have a journal to write down your thoughts/feelings. Or perhaps an invitation to draw to express the moment. Perhaps this moment is not needing a response for you but a moment of stillness and presence.