

## **SEASON AFTER EPIPHANY 2019, PART II: #SeeAllThePeople**

### **SERIES OVERVIEW**

In 2016, Discipleship Ministries began launching materials around the theme “See All the People.” This message of reaching people and expanding the church into the community then began to bear fruit as churches began launching campaigns to strengthen their own disciple-making systems. As we began preparation for this series, we noticed that one element seemed apparent throughout all the scriptural narratives: people who were always present around Jesus because of his preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus truly saw all the people; and as a result, the people were always with him. As the church makes connections in the community to bring people to know Christ, we would do well to make note of the way Jesus responded to the crowds.

In the first week of the series, the pressing crowd is mentioned alongside Jesus’ encouragement for his first disciples to go fishing. The image of the fish breaking the nets becomes an image analogous with the people “pressing in” on Jesus. The second week recalls “a great crowd of Jesus’ disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon” (Lk. 6:17). They were expecting Jesus to heal them. This image is a powerful one as we imagine the crowd relentlessly reaching for Jesus, that they might touch him and receive his healing power. Week three involves a departure for our planning team, as we put ourselves in the shoes of the crowd listening to Jesus’ sermon. The message of loving enemies was (and is) so countercultural that it still causes us to question our very instincts as powers threaten to overtake and divide us. Week four, Transfiguration Sunday, presents a dramatic scene as Jesus is transfigured as he stands with Moses and Elijah. Jesus, Peter, John, and James then descended the mountain, and Jesus healed a boy with a demon—to the astonishment of “a great crowd” (Lk. 9:37).

Upon reflection of the entire season after Epiphany this year, we find a comprehensive way to make connections with our communities: discover our spiritual gifts, understand our need for one another and the love of God, and know that wherever Jesus goes, a crowd is sure to follow. The question is: “Are our churches ready to go and meet the crowds as we ‘see all the people’?”

**Week 1: Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany**

[Luke 5:1-11](#)

**February 10 The Pressing Crowd**

**Week 2: Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany**

**February 17 The Expectant Crowd**

[Luke 6:17-26](#)

**Week 3: Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany**      **February 24**      **The Questioning Crowd**

[Luke 6:27-38](#)

**Week 4: Transfiguration Sunday**      **March 3**      **The Astounded Crowd**

[Luke 9:28-43](#)

\*All scripture quotations are NRSV.

**#SeeAllThePeople**  
**EPIPHANY 5: THE PRESSING CROWD**  
**5th Sunday After Epiphany, Year C**  
**February 10, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectioinaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

February

**All Month** [Black History Month](#)

**February 2** Presentation of the Lord/Candlemas

**February 10** [Scouting Ministries Sunday](#)

**February 18** [Presidents Day](#) (USA)

March

**March 1** [World Day of Prayer](#)

**March 3** [Transfiguration of the Lord](#)

**March 6** [Ash Wednesday](#), and [Lent Begins](#)

**March 31** [UMCOR Sunday](#)

April

**April 14** Palm/Passion Sunday

**April 14-20** Holy Week

**April 18** Maundy Thursday

**April 19** Good Friday

**April 20** Holy Saturday

**April 21** Easter Sunday

**April 24** [Festival of God's Creation](#)

**April 25** [World Malaria Day](#) ([UM Communications](#))

Planning for This Series

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## PREACHING NOTES

### [Luke 5:1-11](#)

#### **The Pressing Crowd, Luke 5:1-11**

The story in Luke 5:1-11 is about the beginning of a life-changing journey for Jesus and his future disciples, including you and me. After the temptation of the devil in Luke 4, Jesus began to teach in the synagogues. He reveals what he is going to do in his ministry, reading the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). After he proclaims that this Scripture is fulfilled, he teaches the crowd, heals the sick, casts out the demons, and preaches the good news of the kingdom of God. Thus, the pressing crowd gathers around Jesus in Luke 5.

#### **From Synagogue to Marketplace**

This transition challenges us to move from the church to the marketplace. Unless we move to the marketplace, we can't see the crowd. The gospel also should not be confined inside the temple, the synagogues, or the churches, but it must be heard in the marketplace where the people are. Jesus always welcomed and spoke to people about

the kingdom of God. He fed the crowd of 5,000 men at one time (Matthew 14:21) and the crowd of 4,000 men at another time (Matthew 15:38). Today's passage didn't mention how many people had gathered, but we could imagine a huge crowd. I often wonder how Jesus could have preached to the multitude without a microphone or any audio systems.

Jesus is so creative in articulating the messages into their lives in the parables. We don't know what message Jesus taught in this passage, but Luke describes how Jesus creatively uses this circumstance to meet the needs of the crowd and of the very exhausted Simon Peter: "He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat." Jesus is probably the only one who preached to the crowds from the boat. Our Christian DNA is to preach the word of God creatively in any circumstance, as John Wesley preached on his father's graveyard at Epworth, England. Wesley used his father's tombstone in the churchyard as a pulpit. For Jesus, his church is the lakeside and the open road, and his pulpit is a boat.[1] Jesus and John Wesley challenge us not to wait for people in the church, but to see all the people beyond the church walls.

### **See What Matters**

A striking moment came after Jesus' preaching. He turned to Peter and said, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." What we know in this story is that Peter worked hard all night and caught nothing. At such a time of loss, he would not have let Jesus use his boat, but he took Jesus on his boat. After preaching, Jesus asked him to cast the nets. As a Galilean, Peter, a fisherman, might have known that Jesus was a carpenter. He might have thought that a carpenter did not know anything about fishing. But he surrendered his prejudice and let down the nets. Peter was the one who sat on the boat with Jesus while he was preaching and heard the good news of Jesus. Peter thought he could rely on him, so he said, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." We experience God's miracles when we rely on the word of God beyond our prejudice and profession. The catch Peter had might be unprecedented. Because of the large number of fishes, their nets were beginning to break.

In a similar story in John 21, Jesus met Peter again after the Resurrection while he was fishing. Jesus said, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in, because there were so many fish. It was full of large fish, with a count of 153. Fishermen counted when they caught fish. Counting blessings is what we do when we are blessed. Everyone in the scene of Luke 5 would count and were amazed at what they caught. Then, what would you say to Jesus? You would say, "Thank you very much." But Peter was different. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Simon Peter acknowledged that Jesus is the Lord and that he (Peter) was a sinner. He saw the more

important matter than fishes, which was knowing that he was a sinful man who could not be with the Lord on the same place. This miracle brought Peter to understand both his own sinfulness and Christ's holiness.[2]

A faith journey starts with a confession, proclaiming who Jesus is and knowing who we are. Peter would say he is a fisherman when people asked who he was. You might say to people, "I am a businessman or a businesswoman, a technician or an engineer, a farmer, or a fisherman" based on your profession. But what would tell Jesus who you are?

### **Called to a Higher Purpose**

It is up to us whether the encounter with Jesus is a one-time event or an eternal one. Jesus' answer to Peter, who asked him to leave, is an invitation: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." Then Simon Peter and his partners, James and John, left the fishes and everything else and followed Jesus. Among the crowd, many who heard the preaching of Jesus and saw the power of Jesus, considered this event a time of amazement only. But a few knew the higher purpose beyond the blessings as the call to discipleship. What is your purpose in life, in business, and in ministry? Discipleship is not adding something, but subtracting to focus on the higher purpose of "catching people."

The challenges for the churches and congregations in Luke 5:1-11 was to go to the marketplaces to see all the people, preach the good news of Jesus Christ, and invite them to the higher purpose. It was to dream big for God, see what people don't see, find the meaning of life, change the priority in life, and become a disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

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[1] *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 53.

[2] *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896), 145.

## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

Articles and Resources

[Push Out Into the Deep \(hymn\)](#)

[21st Century African Liturgy Resources for the Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany](#)

Seasonal/Secular

[Black History Month](#)

Valentine's Day (Feb. 14)

[Valentine's Day and Love Divine](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

**#SeeAllThePeople**  
**EPIPHANY 6: THE EXPECTANT CROWD**  
**6th Sunday After Epiphany, Year C**  
**February 17, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

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Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

February

- All Month** [Black History Month](#)  
**February 2** Presentation of the Lord/Candlemas  
**February 10** [Scouting Ministries Sunday](#)  
**February 18** [Presidents Day \(USA\)](#)

March

- March 1** [World Day of Prayer](#)  
**March 3** [Transfiguration of the Lord](#)  
**March 6** [Ash Wednesday](#), and [Lent Begins](#)  
**March 31** [UMCOR Sunday](#)

April

- April 14** Palm/Passion Sunday  
**April 14-20** Holy Week  
**April 18** Maundy Thursday  
**April 19** Good Friday  
**April 20** Holy Saturday  
**April 21** Easter Sunday  
**April 24** [Festival of God's Creation](#)  
**April 25** [World Malaria Day \(UM Communications\)](#)

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## PREACHING NOTES

### [Luke 6:17-26](#)

Let us engage this text first through the eyes of Jesus, who encounters a large crowd made up of his disciples and many people from all over the region. In viewing the crowd, Jesus saw that the crowd was made up of people who were his disciples, while others were his faithful followers, and still others were people who knew about Jesus. These people wanted not only to see Jesus, they desired to hear Jesus and to be healed of their various ailments.

The writer chooses to use the word *crowd*, which suggests that there were many people gathered around Jesus. To be sure, Jesus was accustomed to being surrounded by a crowd of people. There are many characteristics of a crowd, and we can gain some insight here by looking at a few such characteristics of crowd behavior. First, when a person becomes part of a crowd, there is anonymity. Such anonymity allows the members of a crowd to act as though they do not know one another. This perhaps grants each person a certain freedom to act on his/her own behalf. Second, generally speaking, behavior in a crowd is emotional and usually impulsive. For example, all the people tried to touch Jesus. They exercised their freedom to claim a portion of Jesus' power by touching him. Their anonymity in the crowd allowed them to drop any personal inhibition that might have prevented them from touching Jesus. Third, a

crowd often becomes impersonal, losing its individuality. In this story, the crowd began to act as a group, coming to Jesus and receiving his ministry.

It is important to examine the text by noting a special characteristic of the crowd. This was not an ordinary crowd. They were neither angry nor unruly. This was an expectant crowd. They were full of anticipation, because they knew that since Jesus had previously healed sick people, surely, he could and would heal them. Their expectation was threefold: They wanted to see Jesus and they wanted to hear his comforting words; but most of all, they wanted to be made whole. Jesus did not limit his healing ministry to physical health. He also cured people who were “troubled by impure spirits.” Can you visualize the excitement that was generated by these miraculous activities? How would you describe the scene?

Pause for a moment and note that “all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them” (Luke 6:19). Here we see the power of a touch. The people touched Jesus, rather than being touched by Jesus. There was a transfer of spiritual power or energy. The people not only expected to see Jesus, they expected to be healed by Jesus. Their expectation was based on their belief in the power of Jesus to heal the sick. The release of spiritual energy from Jesus was initiated by the outstretched hands of the ones who touched Jesus.

This passage of Scripture is commonly known as “The Sermon on the Plain.” Jesus “came down with them and stood on a level place” (6:17). The location on a level plain suggests that Jesus assumed a vantage point of equality. In this position, he was not above the people. He could maintain good eye contact with the crowd. In addition, he could readily look out and see who was in the crowd. Jesus, from his vantage point, could read the faces of the people; he could read their body language. He also could sense their expectations, enabling him to prepare himself to respond appropriately.

No doubt this crowd was not unlike the crowds of people that come to our churches and the crowds that stay away from our churches. This crowd of people came to Jesus with open hearts, open minds, seeking open doors. Deep in their hearts they felt that Jesus would empathize with them. Their minds were open to the possibility that Jesus might lead them through his teaching to a new way of living. Finally, they wanted to be welcomed into the doors of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus accepted the people in the crowd just as they were. Are we willing to accept our neighbors who have not yet come to our churches, while ministering to our current congregation?

Perhaps there are some similarities between the crowd on the plain and the crowds that come to our churches. When you look out into your congregation, whom do you see? What are their needs? Who are the people who come to our churches? Do they reflect the neighborhoods around the church? Surely, they are folks who want to hear a Word from the Lord, and they want to be healed. They come with certain expectations. Is your congregation characterized by “open hearts, open minds, and open doors”? Who are the people who do not come to our churches? Do we truly welcome all people regardless of their sexual orientation or other

differences? The General Conference of The United Methodist Church will be grappling with this matter in a Special Called Session (February 24-26, 2019).

Like Jesus, we are called to accept people as they are and to strive to develop a Christian relationship with them. Not only did Jesus heal people, he also taught the people. Jesus perceived their unexpressed needs. Looking into the eyes of his disciples, he taught them about the many ways in which they were blessed. God will bless the people in spite of their status when they align themselves with Jesus. You might be rejected, but “rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven” (6:23).

In this sermon, Jesus issues a warning to those who are rich and comfortable. He articulates a series of woes, signaling the possibility of deep suffering, misfortune, and grief. A life of discipleship is not about popularity; rather, it is about living the truth that Jesus teaches us. It is better to give your life away in service, just as Jesus shared his spirit with those who touched him and believed in his teaching.

In conclusion, the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49) was delivered on a plain at the foot of a mountain. Our text (Luke 6:17-26) is couched in this sermon. There are some similarities between the Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The Luke emphasis, however, is on sympathy with the poor and a duty of spiritual kindness. Just as God seeks us, Jesus wants us to seek God with open hearts, open minds, and open doors. Surely, God wants us to see all of the people in the crowd and to minister to them with fidelity. Indeed, if you look, you will be able to see them if you want to see them. With Jesus, there are no “hidden figures.”

*Ernest S. Lyght, a retired bishop of the United Methodist Church, enjoys reading, writing, teaching, blogging, model trains, and amateur radio. He and his wife, Eleanor, enjoy family gatherings with their two sons and four grandchildren.*

## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

Articles and Resources

[21st Century Liturgy Resources for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany](#)

Seasonal/Secular

[Black History Month](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

**#SeeAllThePeople**  
**EPIPHANY 7: THE QUESTIONING CROWD**  
**7th Sunday After Epiphany, Year C**  
**February 24, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

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**Calendar Notes**

February

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**February 2** **Presentation of the Lord/Candlemas**

**February 10** [Scouting Ministries Sunday](#)

**February 18** [Presidents Day \(USA\)](#)

March

**March 1** [World Day of Prayer](#)

**March 3** [Transfiguration of the Lord](#)

**March 6** [Ash Wednesday](#), and [Lent Begins](#)

**March 31** [UMCOR Sunday](#)

April

**April 14** **Palm/Passion Sunday**

**April 14-20** **Holy Week**

**April 18** **Maundy Thursday**

**April 19** **Good Friday**

**April 20** **Holy Saturday**

**April 21** **Easter Sunday**

**April 24** [Festival of God's Creation](#)

**April 25** [World Malaria Day \(UM Communications\)](#)

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## PREACHING NOTES

### [Luke 6:27-38](#)

Those of us who live in the United States live in a democracy. The United Methodist Church is conceived as a democracy too, with legislative, executive, and judicial branches. I grew up thinking that democracy is definitely the best form of government, and I was pleased that the church was a democracy too. Now I am seeing it more clearly, and I realize that democracy creates winners and losers. Winners take all. The losers are expected to accept the decision and wait until the next vote! But as a mature adult, I see all the people who were on the losing side, and I worry that their voices are not heard.

Both our culture and our church have become increasingly divided; we demonize the "other" and cease listening to one another. In the CEB, verse 27 begins, "But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies." Jesus challenges the crowd to hear. Then he says the shocking phrase, "Love your enemies." What?! He doesn't just tell us to listen to them. We are to *love* them! I can just imagine how the people around him that day must have looked at one another in amazement, shaking their heads at the absurdity of it all. Some must have decided that they were not "willing to hear" and walked away with their heads full of questions. Others began to work on the bargain. Which enemy might they "love" without risking their own position? Others tried to imagine how they could love their enemies. Our imaginations can help us to see

all the people who were there that day listening to Jesus. Their responses were not all the same.

But Jesus does not seem to be asking us to agree. Instead, Jesus asks us to love one another. He is talking about the kingdom of God, where love is the rule, not an eye for an eye. Verses 32-36 contain examples of ways we should be generous and loving, expecting nothing in return. In fact, Jesus tells us (if we are willing to hear), “If you do good to those who do good to you, why should you be commended?” We are to “Be compassionate just as [God] is compassionate.” Everything about this way of being in the world goes against the ways of the world. It is so counter-cultural that we may not be willing to hear.

Imagine how the crowd was questioning this message! If I love my enemy, I will let down my guard, and the enemy may win. If I love my enemy, that enemy may threaten the well-being of my community or my family. If I am not a “winner,” will others suffer too? If I give my coat away, I may be cold. Who will give me a coat when I need it? If I lend money to someone who has no job and no prospect of paying me back, how will I support myself in my retirement? Part of the challenge of this teaching is that we are beset by competing values. If I turn my other cheek after being struck, how badly will I be wounded? Will my wound threaten those who depend on me? Will I lose my position in society because I am shamed? If I give my coat away, how can I pass it on to my child who may be cold? In fact, Jesus asks us to give without expectation of any reward in return. How does this work? Will others be vulnerable because of my sacrifice?

Are we willing to hear? Jesus asks us to “be compassionate just as [God] is compassionate.” The United Methodist Church asserts: “The people of God, who are the church made visible in the world, must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvinced” [2016 *Book of Discipline* ¶130]. So how do we convince the world of the reality of this gospel that Jesus preached? We must focus on compassion and love. Love begins with seeing and hearing those who are different from you. That means that those who voted on the other side should be heard and seen. In the hearing and seeing is the opportunity to love. With hearing and seeing comes understanding and compassion. Compassion is to feel or join in the passion with the other. Can we hear and see those with whom we differ? In hearing and seeing them, can we join in their pain? Can we extend love (not control)? Perhaps most importantly, we extend compassionate love, not in order to get something back (like agreement on an issue or gaining power for a political point of view), but simply because that is the gospel message. “But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies.”

Many years ago, when I was first employed by a congregation as an educator, I was appalled by the resistance that came from some members of the church. They made a show of walking out on the pastor when he began to preach each Sunday. They tried to stir up support for their point of view whenever the church council had a decision to make. I confess: I did not love them! But I also did not ever ask them to explain their point of view. They were enemies, and I didn’t listen to them. As I look back now, 40 years later, I really regret that response. If I had listened to them, I could have become more compassionate and understanding. They were faithful church members all their lives. I suspect that they had some faith-filled reasons for their resistance. Clearly, their methods were poorly chosen. Yet, they may have had important

lessons that all of us needed to hear. I will never know because I did not love my enemies. I was not willing to hear what Jesus has to say to us today. Are you?

If we are to convince the world of the reality of the gospel, we must live the way of love every day and in all parts of our lives. That requires us to *see all the people*, with their differences and their passions. The way of love, the gospel, is at the heart of our mission in the world. If we act the way children of God act, love is at the center.

*Margaret Ann Crain is Professor Emerita of Christian Education at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary where she directed the Deacon Studies Program and invited deacons from across the UMC to Deacon Dialogue conferences. She is a member of Northern Illinois Conference. A new book, **United Methodist Women Bishops: Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit**, coauthored with Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader, will be released in March 2019.*

## GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

### Articles and Resources

[Affirmation of Faith for Epiphany and the Season After Epiphany](#)  
[Prayers and Collects for the Season after the Epiphany](#)

### Seasonal/Secular

[Liturgy Resources for Black History Month \(February\)](#)  
[Benediction for Black History Month](#)  
[United Methodist Hymnal Resources for Black History Month](#)

### Offertory Prayer

### Graphics Downloads

**#SeeAllThePeople**  
**EPIPHANY 8: THE ASTOUNDED CROWD**  
**8th Sunday After Epiphany/Transfiguration, Year C**  
**March 3, 2019**

**PLANNING NOTES**  
**Reading Notes**

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectonnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

**Calendar Notes**

March

- March 1 [World Day of Prayer](#)
- March 3 [Transfiguration of the Lord](#)
- March 6 [Ash Wednesday](#), and [Lent Begins](#)
- March 31 [UMCOR Sunday](#)

April

- April 14 Palm/Passion Sunday
- April 14-20 Holy Week
- April 18 Maundy Thursday
- April 19 Good Friday
- April 20 Holy Saturday
- April 21 Easter Sunday
- April 24 [Festival of God's Creation](#)
- April 25 [World Malaria Day \(UM Communications\)](#)

May

- All Month* [Christian Home Month](#) (2019 Theme:)  
[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- May 6-12 [Christian Family Week](#) (2019 resources forthcoming)
- May 12 [Festival of the Christian Home/Mother's Day](#) (USA)

<b>May 18-19</b>	<a href="#"><u>Change the World Weekend</u></a>
<b>May 19</b>	<a href="#"><u>Heritage Sunday</u></a> (forthcoming)
<b>May 24</b>	<a href="#"><u>Aldersgate Day</u></a>
<b>May 27</b>	<a href="#"><u>Memorial Day (USA)</u></a>
<b>May 30</b>	<b>Ascension of the Lord</b>

## Planning for This Series

As you plan worship for this #SeeAllThePeople series, you will have to keep two things in mind. The first is the purpose of worship: for the gathered Christian community to praise and glorify our Triune God. The second is the focus of the series: to see beyond the walls of your church to the people all around you. In planning worship, be sure to balance these two foci. Your prayers, songs, and sermon can witness to the power and might of God while also proclaiming that we are sent people with a mission from Jesus Christ. Try balancing your music: program songs that focus on God's actions and songs that speak to our mission. Hymns such as "[Here I am, Lord](#)" (UMH 593), "Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service," (UMH 581), or "[Sois la Semilla](#)" (UMH 583) would make good theme hymns for this series.

Because this series is based on our current #SeeAllThePeople campaign, you'll be able to find many complementary resources. Start with the [#SeeAllThePeople website](#) for resources and downloads to be sure that this worship series goes beyond your Sunday service. Perhaps this series can lead up to new way of inviting people into your church for Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter Sunday. If you want to use this series to launch an intentional discipleship system, Lent is a wonderful and historical time to start.

## PREACHING NOTES

### [Luke 9:28-43](#)

"You'll know it when you see it." This phrase could wreck the nerves of even the most confident people. Worry and wonder often come to the minds of those who lack absolute confidence and trust in their directing counterparts. This is not an unusual feeling. Yet, the sudden realization of the moment of truth, arrival at the destination, is liberating and a joy-filled sensation. Sometimes it can even be surprising and shocking to the senses if we are not prepared for what meets us there. Sometimes the moment demands focused attention, listening, watching as our senses adjust after the initial shock.

Consider that feeling when a blindfold is removed, light switches are turned on in the darkness, windows opened without warning; it is unmistakable when that moment of glory arrives. When revealed, what one might have hoped for stands out and even more so when the surprise is better and bigger than one could have ever expected. For many of us, such sudden realization and revelation can be awe-inspiring, while also blinding us from seeing the breadth of what is there, if we aren't ready for the reveal.

The disciples were not ready for what this time away with Jesus would bring, as he went for prayer. They knew they had journeyed up the mountain with Jesus, but the glory that comes from following him was not on their minds. They lacked awareness and understanding of the mystery of Jesus' chosenness and were not anticipating anything worth waiting for. They were overcome in their tiredness until, suddenly, they were shocked in their senses by the glory that shone so brightly. Suddenly, the familiar experience of Jesus in prayer revealed a seemingly obvious truth that they were too tired to process fully and accurately. His glory was revealed so much so that Jesus' face was changed in its appearance. Even his clothes took on the splendor of dazzling white, an unspeakable brightness of joy.

Peter in his haste does not know what he is asking when he reacts to this encounter by offering to build a tent for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This glory is not something bound to the persons of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and thus cannot be restricted to "dwell in houses made with hands" (see Acts 7:48-50). Jesus is the light of the world, the glory of the people of Israel. However, at this moment, we come to know of the exodus plans, the transition for Jesus' life, in the divine conversation he has with Moses and Elijah. These are plans for the good of all God's people and plans that will influence the lives of those who follow Jesus.

In Peter, we see how the disciples seemed to have missed something in translation, as they do not yet understand the lessons they have been taught while following Jesus in his prayer life. They were caught up in the joy of the moment, forgetting that coming down from the mountain, away from the place of this singular experience, was needed. The disciples were led into what was initially a bright and joy-filled splendor, but they were not ready. They were led to witness this manifestation of the glory of God, but Peter responded in ignorance, which turned to terror as the disciples were deprived of their natural senses when they came into the cloud and heard the voice of God speak of Jesus as God's chosen one. They learned through this experience not to depend on their understanding, to trust God, and look only to Jesus, who remained once their senses returned and the splendor of glory was no longer in plain sight.

The disciples on the mountain benefited from the freedom of distraction when the voice of God spoke. They were forced to listen, to pray. We find that the other followers down the mountain were also in need of renewed revelation as to all that Jesus offered them in prayer by the Spirit. His disciples were likely distracted, seeing in themselves this divine provision rather than completely trusting and depending on the teachings of

Jesus. They could not heal the son who was brought to Jesus from among the crowd at the foot of the mountain, and Jesus did not mince words in his frustration.

Jesus embodies what many of us seem to forget. He shows us the importance of setting apart in prayer before coming back to see all the people informed in the fullness of God's glory. In him, we are reminded to trust in the essential directions we have been provided to pray, listen, and care for the holistic needs of people.

Before leaving our own mountaintop experiences with Jesus at church, in retreats, on vacations, we are faced with a sobering truth. The places, occasions, and experiences of joy are not something to hold fast to and try to make last forever within structures of our own creation. We will not always have the benefit of the focus that comes from being desensitized from the world and embraced in a cloud filled with God's voice. Yet, we have prayer, just as Jesus had, and can rely on the inspiration and discernment of the Spirit Jesus left for us.

God has a plan for us, just as Jesus knew of the plans for his life in death and resurrection. We are called to go back to the people, to follow Jesus back down the mountain, resting on our feet in Spirit and truth.

Jesus recognized in the people both the need for what he had to offer and the lack of faithfulness that permeated his followers. Even though he exclaimed his frustration to this generation of believers, he then casts out the evil spirit and heals the son. It is understandable that what he has done is by God and something his followers should be able to do. Much like Peter, the people needed to recognize the glory of God. This outreach and forming of followers and believers was his destination. Faithfulness to God and commitment to the people is foundational to what it is to be a disciple of Jesus, to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (the mission of The United Methodist Church).

We are challenged to follow the directions of Jesus to this destination faithfully and to trust that how we are being led is enough. We are to trust that the destination of the coming of God's kingdom for all of the people, whenever we reach that aim, is worth the anticipation and staying awake for. If we grow more concerned with following Christ, then we will be closer to living by faith and leading the people to do the same. By faith, we will be ready whenever God's glory shines, no matter how sudden and no matter how brightly.

Take notice that not only the father of the healed son benefited from this much anticipated experience of seeking Jesus' help as his destination for healing. Surely the father was anxious, even though he knew Jesus was the destination. Surely the crowd looked on with anticipation, even if believing Jesus could do this for the man. Even the disciples who could not do what Jesus was then able to do must have felt a knot of worry or guilt in their stomachs as they felt much the same. Yet, the wrecking of their

nerves, the wonder and worry, their lack of full confidence in the power of Jesus was released in great joy as the crowd was overwhelmed by God's great and glorious power.

Remember that just as the disciples on the mountain needed to see the glory of God revealed, so the people needed to see as well. And, just as Jesus prayerfully prepared for continued work among the people, so we disciples of Jesus must prepare ourselves, go up on our mountains in prayer, and bring the glory of the Lord to all people, in all places, by faith.

We must see all the people however we have been divinely gifted to do so. The disciples who could not heal the boy taught us that being present is not enough. Knowing of the needs of the people we encounter is not enough. We must do more than look around us for God's glory to shine in others or in some outward provision. We must be the light and seek to spread God's glory among the people as we meet them wherever they are and however they are in need.

The transfiguration of Jesus need not be left for the mountain-top experience. We must bring the transfiguration to all the people.

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## **GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES**

Articles and Resources

[21st Century Africana Resources for Transfiguration Sunday](#)  
[A Great Thanksgiving for Transfiguration Sunday](#)

Seasonal/Secular

[Women's History Month \(March\)](#)  
[Ash Wednesday](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads