

2.14.21

Guest Preacher Krista Kilgus, Urban Servant Corps

Pastor Barb:

So this is the last Sunday of Epiphany. And we are beginning to get ready for the season of Lent. Most of you know that I spent almost a decade of my ministry as the Executive Director of the Urban Servant Corps in Denver. It is an organization you're going to hear much about in the weeks ahead. But I wanted to introduce to you today the Executive Director who's served even longer, now, since I left, and her name is Krista Kilgus. She was a volunteer in the house when I was there, and she's done an incredible job at the Urban Servant Corps. So we welcome Krista through the course of Lent every Wednesday night when we do Holden Evening Prayer. We will have videos from Urban Servant Corps volunteers who will tell you about their experience there, and the tenants of the Urban Servant Corps, so I hope you will join us on Wednesday nights.

Krista:

Good morning, and happy Valentine's Day. I thank you kindly for the invitation to join you and worship this morning. My name is Krista Kilgus, and I bring warm greetings from the Urban Servant Corps community in downtown Denver. I am deeply grateful for your support and your care for the ministry of Urban Servant Corps, which is a social ministry of the Rocky Mountain Synod. Thank you for the opportunity to join you throughout our Lenten journey. As I gathered with colleagues in our Synod to talk about today's text. Someone asked, "Is anyone mentioning anything about Valentine's Day?" And after many handshakes indicating, "nah", someone started sharing a bit of history, a fascinating history that many of us didn't know. And so here's a simplified version,

A Roman ruler, Claudius II, needed soldiers. He thought that married men would not join his army. So he made it against the law to marry. A priest named Valentine disagreed and performed weddings in secret. Claudius found out, and then threw Valentine in jail. Valentine then made friends with the jailer's daughter and wrote notes to her signed, "from, your Valentine."

Valentine was put to death then on February 14th more than 1700 years ago, and now has eventually become known as St. Valentine. So, today, whether you are a chocolate and candy hearts fan or not, we honor St. Valentine for his advocacy work around love. Advocacy work around love might not be a bad thing to hang on to.

So, for a bit of context for those who may be learning newly about Urban Servant Corps, we believe that service is transformational and that it changes how people show up in the world. Service offers a sharing of the human experience. And we believe that it's a faithful response for what it means to care for one another. At Urban Servant Corps, service takes shape in the heart of Denver as full time volunteers, living on a \$75 monthly stipend, are living intentionally with one another. These volunteers arrived to actively engage their faith, to practice simplicity, and serve full-time at nonprofit organizations. They embark on lives of service, healing, and justice for those who are vulnerable in our neighborhood. Folks who are experiencing homelessness,

families in need of food, seniors in need of health care, teens who are pregnant and parenting while working to receive their high school diplomas. The intentional community piece that Urban Servant Corps simply means the commitment to belong to one another and to live with a common purpose. They do all of this with an attitude of simplicity, a heightened awareness of needs versus wants, and exploring the difference between simplicity and minimalism.

Throughout this Lenten journey, each Wednesday evening you will have the opportunity to hear from a current Urban Servant Corps volunteer who will offer their reflections of these lived values: intentional community service, faith, and simplicity. So I invite you to receive the gift of these stories that they will offer. I learn something new every time we are gathered with them. And I imagine you will too.

All right, let's roll up our sleeves and dig into this transfiguration story, as that is what this Sunday's Bible story, this good news today, is about. Now, my Colorado brothers and sisters, have you been on a hike with your friends? During that hike, have you taken a moment to be in awe of something along your way? Have you discovered something abnormal or unexplainable on your journey? I also wonder if you've had any experiences as of late, say, in the last year or so, with feeling terrified, or curious, or speechless.

See, some portions of this text of the transfiguration are fairly relatable. As we imagine this mountaintop experience of Peter, James, fellow humans, on this journey, it feels kind of good that we share emotions and experiences with, you know, the disciples. Now other parts of the story may feel a bit more out of reach, like a voice from the clouds and seeing a glowing bright shiny Jesus, on a fairly ordinary day. Although, I won't put those out of the realm of your experience because it has been a year. And it's biblical after all.

I'm also drawn to notice the overlap of some of the language, between the lessons and this gospel. In 2 Corinthians, we hear about letting our light shine out of the darkness. And then in the gospel, we have a cloud overshadowing and Jesus radiating, dazzling and offering a very visual representation of shining light. In 2 Kings, this piece about being silent. "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And the response is "Yes, I know. Keep silent." And then similarly in the gospel, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen. Silence. Light and silence. Where do we find the good news in light and in silence?

Light, according to Webster's dictionary, is something that makes vision possible. And silence, the complete absence of a sound or preventing someone from speaking. Might we absorb the light around us while in silence, take in the awe of unexplainable experiences that perhaps we aren't yet intended to understand. Might we share a light with our neighbor and then be in silence about our good deed. Might we notice the light in the darkness and reflect in silence about our need for repentance. We are moving into Lent, after all.

I read a piece in the magazine *Christian Century* that shares, "Transfiguration is an invitation to return to our communities and our lives with renewed attention and patience, awaiting the luminance of the mundane. To attend to the present and wonder at the ordinary. To let this life

astonish us with the sacred.” Awaiting the luminescence of the mundane. To let this life astonish us with the sacred.

A pastor recently shared that she had invited members of her congregation where she was serving to take her to a place that they considered sacred. And a few things happened. Some were hesitant to share what felt holy to them, like it was particularly vulnerable to welcome someone into a sacred space. Understandable. And yet others interpreted this request as a secret place. What was sacred to them was secret, or private. Isn't that interesting? And how might that tie in to the secret that the disciples were asked to keep for the time being. A secret of their sacred and holy mountaintop experience, of an intensely white and radiant Jesus, and a request from God to listen.

Where are your sacred places? Are you willing to share them? What are those sacred moments? Are you listening? Are you astonished? Do you wonder at the ordinary? As we head into our Lenten journey, reflecting on this transfiguration of Jesus, may we seek the sacred and be astounded by it. May we discover the silence and be in awe of not understanding. And may we know that light will come as we spend time dwelling in a place of wonder.

Amen.