

## My Son

2 Peter 1:16-21      Crossroads Christian Church  
Matthew 17:1-9      March 9, 2014  
Transfiguration/Lent 1 A

One of the very most significant men in my life was Sandy's father Wayne McBride. He was a remarkable man, though not the kind that stands out in a crowd. He worked at Maytag's factory in Newton, Iowa, making washing machines for over 40 years, and after he retired, he lived to be a sharp and spry 96-year-old before he passed away 10 years ago. He seemed intimidating to me at first, in that he could build and fix anything—and I was all thumbs. Our house still contains his handiwork—cedar chest, hutch, shelves, and much more. He was a wonderful storyteller, too, and he would make alive what it was like growing up in rural Iowa back in the teens and twenties.

As he and Sandy's mom grew older, we made almost monthly trips to Iowa to visit and help out around the house. I still recall something special that happened on one of those trips. It was something so small and quick that I might have overlooked it. But I didn't. I had just stepped out of the van, and he held out his hand, and said, "Welcome, my son." I simply said, "I'm glad to be here, Dad." This wasn't the first time that he had made a point to let me know that he considered me his own son. Even before my own father died, Wayne McBride had let me know that I was his son, too. It means a lot to me. It's a special blessing. I loved him as a father, and he loved me as a son, not just as a son-in-law. Maybe some of you are gifted with that kind of relationship with your in-laws. It's a beautiful thing.

Last Sunday was Transfiguration Sunday, the last and climactic Sunday of Epiphany, the season of God's self-disclosure, but we couldn't gather because of the weather. Let's review the season of Epiphany. First, we remembered Christ's baptism, and the voice from heaven, the voice of God which said, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Then each week, the evidence has mounted. Jesus called the disciples. Then he taught them and us in the Sermon on the Mount. Now we come upon the time of Transfiguration. A week before, when Jesus asked "Who do you say that I am," Peter responded, "You are the Christ." Then Jesus predicted his own humiliation and death at the hands of the authorities, and after that, his resurrection. How must have this all seemed to the disciples? Jesus was human, intensely so. He felt pity, hunger, weariness, anger. He had friends, and he was a friend. But he was more than human. God worked in and through him in a unique way.

Jesus took his three closest friends, Peter, James and John, up on a high mountain, by themselves. They were used to Jesus going to lonely places such as this to pray. But something more was to happen. This man, their friend, began to look like God. God's glory shone through him and around him. His clothes were so white they glowed like the sun. Elijah and Moses appeared beside him, talking to him. They symbolized the law and the prophets, the foundations of the Jewish faith. The poor quaking disciples must have remembered how Elijah had heard the still, small voice of God after the earthquake, wind, and fire. They must

have remembered Moses climbing the mountain to receive the law of God, and how when he returned down the mountain, his face had shone like the sun.

Peter was so overwhelmed and nervous that he started to babble. “Teacher, it’s so good that we can be here! Let’s build something! Let’s put up a monument. We’ll make three shrines.”

Then the cloud gathered, like the cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of flame by night that had led the Hebrew children through the desert during the Exodus. And from the cloud they heard the voice saying, “This is my Son, my beloved; listen to him.” They were still trying to absorb all this, the light, the presence of Moses and Elijah, the cloud, the voice, when they realized they were alone with Jesus once more, just as they had been a few moments ago—or was it an eternity ago? Funny how sometimes time seems to stand still. To the stunned disciples, Jesus said, “Get up. Don’t be afraid.”

There are times in life that just take your breath away. They’re moments that are just saturated with holiness, with awe, with wonder. Sometimes it’s the moment of birth when a new life enters the world. Sometimes it’s the moment of death, when God’s presence is close and we know that the one we have lost will be with God forever. Sometimes it’s a moment of great beauty, with snow covering the tree branches underneath a brilliant winter sky. For some of us, we had a sense of awe and holiness back when we saw TV pictures of the earth’s image rising above the surface of the moon, and hearing the astronaut read, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” At that point, earth was transfigured for us. We saw it in a new way, as a beautiful yet fragile home, a gift from God.

What happened at the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ? The disciples saw Christ in a new way, as the One whom God loved more than anyone else, as the one who would be the ultimate expression of God’s love to the world. It was pretty much the same thing that happened at Jesus’ baptism, an epiphany, a revelation, where God said, “This is my son, whom I love.” Jesus, of his own free will, had accepted the road which would lead him to the cross. And God was affirming him and that decision. That’s why the story of the Transfiguration is a perfect way to transition from the season of epiphany, to the beginning of the journey of Lent, where we follow Christ toward Jerusalem and the Cross.

Our earlier reading from the Second Letter of Peter builds upon the Gospel. It’s unusual in the New Testament to have an incident from the life of Christ, other than his crucifixion, referred to in one of the letters. But today we heard the apostle Peter, probably old, probably near being martyred, looked deep into his memories, past the crucifixion and resurrection, past his denial of Jesus and past the risen Christ calling him to “feed my sheep,” back to that mountaintop moment; back to when he saw his friend and master Jesus in a cloud of light; to that moment when he heard God say to Jesus, “My Son.”

When we tell people about God’s love through Jesus Christ, or when we act out that love in acts of mission, justice, and caring, we have our own little moments of holiness, moments of participation in that divine love. And each time someone comes to get baptized, we know by faith that God is saying, “This is my son, whom I love” or “This is my daughter, whom I love.”

Here God's light shines in our hearts. In our own baptism, as did the disciples at the transfiguration, we experience the glory of God in the face of Christ. We affirm what it is to be God's beloved children. At communion, we share bread and wine, bits of the ordinary, transfigured with Christ's presence with us. As we live our daily lives, we should keep our eyes open. Each day can be a holy day. Each place can be a holy place. Each person can be a giver and recipient of God's love. Let us live as God's beloved children. Amen.

By Michael E. Dixon