

## 2.19.23 – Transfiguration Sunday

### “Teaching Ourselves to Teach Others”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

#### 1 Chronicles 22:11-19 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> “Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God, as he said you would. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. <sup>13</sup> Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.

<sup>14</sup> “I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them. <sup>15</sup> You have many workers: stonecutters, masons and carpenters, as well as those skilled in every kind of work <sup>16</sup> in gold and silver, bronze and iron—craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you.”

<sup>17</sup> Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon. <sup>18</sup> He said to them, “Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not granted you rest on every side? For he has given the inhabitants of the land into my hands, and the land is subject to the Lord and to his people. <sup>19</sup> Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that will be built for the Name of the Lord.”

**Leader: These are David’s Instructions to His Son. All:** Thanks be to God!

#### 1 Timothy 4:6, 8-11, 13-16 (ESV)

*A Good Servant of Christ Jesus*

<sup>6</sup> If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

<sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. <sup>9</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. <sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

<sup>11</sup> Command and teach these things.

<sup>13</sup> Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup> Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

**Leader: These are Words of Instruction for Us. All:** Thanks be to God!

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Lord, thank you for this Transfiguration Sunday to remind us that God is a living God through Jesus his son and our savior. It reminds us of our divine relationship with God because of Jesus' birth into this world. As we prepare for Lent which begins this week, we are also preparing to implement elements of our theme, Divine Experiments, so prepare our hearts and minds to receive your direction from the Scriptures read and this message today. Be with those who could not be here, and please speak through me this morning. Amen.

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Thank you to all who attended and helped in so many ways during Hazel's celebration of life service on Thursday. The extended family as well as Sherry and George were pleased with how we honored her life and faith. A copy of her full obituary is posted downstairs on the bulletin board if you have not read it.

As you heard in my prayer, today, we acknowledge Transfiguration Sunday, as told in the Synoptic Gospels of [Matthew 17:1–8](#), [Mark 9:2–8](#), [Luke 9:28–36](#), and from [2 Peter 1:16–18](#). In the history of Christianity, it grew out of the Desert Fathers' study of the light described and the veneration of holy mountains like Mount Tabor where it occurred, and continued through the Byzantine era (late 4<sup>th</sup> century-15<sup>th</sup> century) where cathedrals and eastern orthodox churches were built with beautiful paintings emphasizing the moment Christ revealed his divinity to his special disciples. In Western theology, we tend to focus more on the resurrection and appearances to connect Christ's divinity with his life on earth and teachings. Both views are valid as we rely on Scripture to inform and inspire us.

Today's lessons are human instruction, yet also inspired by God's connection with us. We've studied Chronicles before as a history of the kings, but today's lesson specifically is from David to his son Solomon. It too takes place on one of the holy mountains in Israel, Mount Moriah, the

rising land in the old city of Jerusalem slightly east where the Dome of the Rock is now built. Mount Moriah was where Abraham, as instructed by the Lord, offered his son, Isaac, to God for a sacrifice and where Isaac was set free in place of the ram that was caught in the thicket. This area was called the mount “where the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:14).”

The Lord told David because of his many years of battle and bloodshed, he would not build the temple to him, but that his son was to build the priestly temple there and reign in peace after him. Yet David hired all the workers and secured the supplies out of his meager wealth, calling his son Solomon to explain God’s instruction. Solomon means *Sh'lomoh* in Hebrew, for peaceful, and comes from *Shalom*, go with peace. David charged Solomon with the task of building the temple and instructed the nation’s leaders to support his son in this Godly plan to protect and house the ark of the covenant within it, relying on God’s direction. The specific amount of money (though mentioned in the passage) is not as important as the fact that he sacrificed all he had for this task, and today it would have been billions of dollars.

For the Chronicler and for us here, religion was not just a pious reflection of God or worshipping him; rather, it involved active participation in the institutional life of the community, feeling God’s presence working within it and its people. Verses 17-19 were words of encouragement that Solomon would need later. David did not give Solomon orders to just do something; David reminded him to rely on the power of God to complete the task. This is an example of intergenerational spiritual instruction and divine leadership so needed for any church or “building” project. I speak of building up, not construction.

That is what we must do as well: build up the church while deeply relying on God's will and direction in all we say, plan, and do.

Now in the second passage, Paul reminds the young minister Timothy to draw on his instruction received as a young disciple. Physical fitness is important, remembering that in the new covenant through Christ, our bodies are the temple, so must be respected and honored. He also reminds him that Godliness is more important now and in eternity. Paul reminds Timothy to put his hope in the savior of all men and to be firm and courageous in his work. There were three guidelines; 1.) Conduct public reading of Scripture, 2.) Preach the word of God, and 3.) Teach the lessons of Christ systematically. Paul tells the inexperienced, shy Timothy and tells **us**, who may be timid, but certainly more experienced in our faith, to be diligent, watching your life and doctrine closely. "You'll save yourself and others!"

Timothy had been sent to an area not unlike our own, Ephesus, a fertile land of commerce and growth (there was no additional earthquake damage to the ruins at Ephesus, by the way); there were eating and food rules controversies much like our own of gluten free choices, veganism, vegetarianism, judgmentalism, etc. Paul tells him to pay more attention to the spiritual feeding than to any conflict over physical feeding. Spiritual exercise is more important for one's soul than physical exercise. I say the same to us at Lent; although it is healthy to respect our bodies and increase our discipline by fasting at Lent (like chocolate, sweets, or alcohol reduction), but it is even more important to **add** a spiritual discipline to draw us closer to Jesus, using silence, prayer, contemplation, or meditation. Christ's work on the cross and his resurrection are divinely

sufficient for our salvation if we believe and trust in him. Our disciplines are to encourage our human selves, like Paul taught Timothy and David taught Solomon.

We must teach ourselves the gospel first before we can teach others. Like Timothy, some of us are shy; others are bolder like Paul. Just as there are different styles of teaching, there are different styles of learning. Some people respond better to hearing, others to seeing, and still others to touch or doing the tasks. We must remember this as we discern what divine experiments to try. There must be diverse opportunities for all to meet Jesus.

At Hazel Ball's funeral, there were 14 grandchildren and 21 great grands several of whom were not comfortable with funerals; it may have been their first one ever, so we tried to make them comfortable by addressing emotions in the room: sadness, joy, tears, and laughter all allowed and encouraged. Some may not have been in church often; Hazel prayed for them always. Rev. Jerry Young's message said it so well; Hazel planted quiet seeds of her faith in anyone she met. That's what we must do: plant seeds of faith in our community and through our divine experiments. The word divine does not mean some holy activity every time; it might mean pizza night or a movie showing or eating out at local restaurants, just being kind and generous to the servers who may have had a bad day.

We must also plant distinct types of seeds among those who do not know Jesus or have been away from him for a while. Beating someone up verbally about getting back to church does NOT work, I assure you. Showing your own faith example, learning the Bible well, and speaking

up about your faith when there is opportunity are healthy seeds. Even opening the doors of our hospitable church on Thursday planted seeds of welcome not fear. Different soils may be required to plant some seeds. You cannot plant a cactus in deep rich potting soil; it needs sand. African violets and orchids require different soils and fertilizer than other houseplants. It's the same with people. Some like poetry, others drum music, and still others art or silence. Every idea must be measured against God's plumb line – is it in keeping with Jesus, Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit? Discernment is the second step. Just because we can does not mean we should. Some new things are germinating; help us discern both the need and the ability to implement them. Be enthusiastic about how God is working here! We have some young men practicing baseball exercises in the gym now occasionally—another chance to seem welcoming as a church. Keep praying! Keep learning. We will keep building “up” the church! Amen. //

**Will you pray with me?** Creator God, help us to stick closer to you in all our plans and divine experiments. We know you are working here in our church, our mission center, and our community. Let us work beside you, demonstrating to others your love and care. Transfigure our lives to be more like yours, Jesus. Teach us so we may teach others; inspire us and equip us. In Jesus' name, we pray, **Amen.**