

**Sermon: Join In The Cosmic Dance****Scripture: Matthew 17****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: February 15, 2026**

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I'd like to believe there's joy here in this passage of the transfiguration of Jesus, that it's not actually a solemn scene. I wonder at times if there is much more lightheartedness and laughter even in the scriptures than we allow for. Are we too serious sometimes? Am I too serious sometimes? I think probably so, here in our very serious worship services where there is no foolin' around. The kids give us permission to let loose a tiny bit and laugh and be antsy and be a little playful but then they leave we're like "ok now, settle down, it's time we get to adult things and get serious!"

Jesus and the disciples went up to the mountaintop and Jesus became radiant and the disciples were terrified and Peter blows it again by suggesting memorials might be built and God gets angry at him and now Jesus must go down the mountain and walk his death walk to Jerusalem. And here we go into Lent and have to give things up and be disciplined and serious and have ashes rubbed on our faces this Wednesday and be reminded that we are going to die one day and that we are nothing but dust!

Maybe you've heard about the kid at the funeral who hears the severe minister say "we are but dust" and the kid turns to his mom and says "what the heck is butt dust?"

Stop this is not funny. This is serious. But seriously maybe we do a disservice to some of this when we make it only serious. Cause I think some of it has got to be joyful, right? Of course the passion and the

crucifixion that we'll come to at Holy Week is in no way joyful but we haven't entered into Lent yet and we are not at the point of Jesus' suffering and death and in Jesus there must have been equal parts joy too right? If he was fully God and fully human then his suffering and sorrow must have been as deep as any humans and his joy and enjoyment must have been as deep as any as well. Many Christians do the suffering and sorrow and judgement quite well, but give short-shrift to the joy and playfulness and and lightness that is equally in God if not more so in God. I mean, look at creation and tell me God is not playful as well as serious!

The Trappist Monk Thomas Merton refers to creation and existence as something more like a dance, a joyful dance...

The world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness. The silence of the spheres is the music of the wedding feast! The more we persist in misunderstanding the phenomena of life and analyze them out into strange finalities and complex purposes of our own devising, the more we involve ourselves in sadness, absurdity and despair. But (he says) it doesn't matter much because no despair of ours can alter the reality of things, or stain the joy of the cosmic dance which is always there. Indeed we are in the midst of it and it is in the midst of us for it beats in our very blood whether we want it to or not. Yet the fact remains that we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnities to the wind and join in the general dance.

Now that's an interesting line and approach for a Lenten commitment this year - let's forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnities to the wind and join in the general dance!

You know where many of us experienced that - a casting away of our awful solemnities and a joining in the general dance - a week ago? It was in a totally unexpected place and beautifully profound way, that left many of us stunned? At the Super Bowl with Bad Bunny's halftime show. If for some

reason you haven't seen it or read about it, you're missing a beautiful counter-point moment to all the awful solemnities that have consumed us over the last months. The Puerto-Rican singer songwriter and producer Bad Bunny did something so beautiful in response to all the terrible actions against diversity and inclusion in our country, and the fear that immigrants are experiencing in our country, he invited us nationally and globally actually into a 12 minute dance party and a wedding feast and a glimpse into the joyful culture of Latin America and Puerto Rico. Of course he did not hesitate to include images, symbols and signs of protest, but overall we all sat there on our couches and watched joy unfolding before us. We watched Bad Bunny singing completely in Spanish throwing the awful solemnities to the wind and inviting us whether we understood what he was saying or not to join the general dance. It was so beautiful, so holy, that party on that football field. Thank you Bad Bunny for reminding us that "no despair of ours can stain the joy of the cosmic dance" and that "we are indeed in the midst of it and it is in the midst of us, for it beats in our very blood whether we want it to or not!"

So keeping in mind the truth and reality and the JOY of the cosmic dance that is going on whether we want it or not, let's consider just for a moment this scripture of the transfiguration of Jesus again, because I don't think Jesus was transfigured into radiant light with seriousness and harshness, right? I think it was an expression of divine joy, this moment on the mountain top. Have you ever been on a mountain top? Is there despair and seriousness up there, no way, there is beauty and if you are moved it is usually not with fear and despair but with awe and wonder and if tears are brought to your eyes it's not about sorrow at all but some mysterious sense of joy at the beauty of it all, isn't it? So just taking that point of view,

imagine going up with a teacher or friend and you're standing there taking in the beauty of the landscape around you and then he or she begins to glow and to shine radiantly with an inward light. It would not be a moment of severity but joy in that moment of light, right? You could almost imagine the figure dancing in and with the light as much as anything!

The transfiguration is a blowing out of those boundaries that keep things small and sorrowful and deadly serious, a blasting forth of divine joy. Yes there were some sorrowful things that came before and certainly some sorrowful things to come for Jesus but there was a lot of joy too and certainly this moment was one of radiance, an incredible moment of joy and light that is breathtaking, intending to remind the disciples, and us by extension, that no matter how dark, how tragic, how sad this life can be, at its source, its heart and its destination is joy, love, light. It's such a gift given to the disciples before they try and accompany Jesus on his way to his passion and death, this taste of radiant joy, in the face of everything. It's so beautiful!

And... it's true that Peter spoils it a little bit, like only Peter can do. The disciples are shocked and a little terrified by this divine expression of radiant joy and Peter isn't sure what to do but Peter is a do-er and doesn't like for there not to be anything to do and so he suggests that they build a structure, a memorial, to it to contain it and define it and to make it less... I don't know... extravagant, dangerous, less expansive. And that's when the voice of God comes and says in what I've always imagined as an angry God voice - "be quiet Peter, this is my beloved son, listen to him!" But c'mon, maybe it was much more a delighted and laughing God voice getting a bit of a kick out of how scared Peter is, how baffled and how easily he puts his foot in his mouth and God laughs and says "Haha! This is

my son.” Actually here is how Eugene Peterson translates this phrase in The Message, he has God saying this: “This is my Son, marked by my love, the focus of my delight. Listen to him” God doesn’t sound PO’ed when you really hear those words - this is my son the focus of my delight? That sure sounds like a joyful God, right? And no fear or despair of the disciples can stain the joy of the cosmic dance, that they are getting a glimpse of, for it is going on in them and around them and Jesus is dancing in it!

They’ll remember it in times to come.

In fact at the end of the Bible in the 2 Peter, Peter specifically writes - “We were eyewitnesses to this majesty.” Here Peter seems to understand it a little better as he is conveying to his people the experience on the mountaintop. He says - “this is not a cleverly designed myth of ours, this really happened. Jesus received honor and glory in that moment, we heard it ourselves and a voice emanating from The Majestic Glory on that holy mountain.” Apparently Peter understood it by then, years after Jesus’ death and resurrection as he was now being carried forth by that radiant joy, understanding that no memorial or structure was an appropriate response to it but living it, loving it, dancing it into the future.

And that’s where we are left as we enter into Lent this week, remembering the general dance that is going on in God and that we are always being invited into. Let us allow Bad Bunny and Jesus himself to lead us into that general dance and find the joy even or especially in the coming season of Lent and in the midst of this time, casting our awful solemnities to the wind and joining in the cosmic dance.