

Good morning! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Carol Beckett. Y'all are probably wondering why I'm giving the sermon today, and honestly, the best answer I can give you is that I felt moved to ask if I'd be allowed to, and Charles graciously extended his approval and guidance. I speak to you today with absolutely no credentials other than growing up in the Episcopal church, and more specifically, within this particular church community.

There's a lot to unpack from today's readings. So, I did what I always do, I made a word cloud. I took the words that stood out to me from each reading, sermon, and piece of research that I read, and tried to unpack why they were the words that jumped off the page. Some of those words were the ones you'd expect: transfiguration, theophany, and extraordinary. Others were not: vulnerable, fear, forgetful, and ordinary. It's fitting that today, the last day of epiphany, is also World Mission Sunday in the Episcopal church..

We look at the extraordinary missions, assuming we define mission as spreading the love and word of God, that were started by the people in the readings today. Of Peter, James, and John, following their encounter with Jesus, Moses, Elijah, and God; as well as the mission started by Moses, after his transfiguration on Mount Sinai. But how can we fathom fitting these extraordinary and, albeit, probably really time consuming missions into our own, ordinary lives and routines?

So, as I do when things are confusing, messy, and scary, I called my mom. She, of course, didn't have a solid answer, but gave me an even better one: I don't know. Let's figure it out. I asked some friends, both those who worship every Sunday, and those who claim to be "spiritual but not religious", what *mission* meant to them. And the answers I got were what you would ordinarily expect: to spread God's love, forgiveness, and acceptance. It got me thinking, what if our mission isn't really as extraordinary as the mountain top experiences of personal epiphanies we read about in the news today, or even the mountain top experiences of theophany we read about in the gospel? In our world today, most of the missions we see aren't by biblical standards extraordinary, but simply the ordinary ones we tend to overlook

and even forget. The ones that don't happen on the proverbial "mountain top" but right here, on level ground.

It's a parent helping their child finish their homework after a long and grueling day at work. It's a stranger returning the 10\$ bill you dropped in the check out line with just a smile. It's someone holding that elevator door for you when you are already running late. And, at the risk of sounding like the semantically incorrect Alanis Morissette song, it's even in the free ride when you've already paid.

All around us, when we stop for a moment and reflect, we see that the work of our everyday ordinary actions, can be transfigured by God and moved by the Holy Spirit into something extraordinary. 5 days ago for many of you, was simply an ordinary and probably a mundane, Tuesday. For my family and myself, it was anything but. We celebrated my grandmother, Kaworu's, 100th birthday.

When you ask this woman about her life, she will always tell you that it was ordinary. However, it's anything but.

In 1958, Kaworu and Hikaru Yanagihara moved to Japan. Hikaru had finished seminary and gotten his PhD, and felt it was time to return to Japan. So, Kaworu moved to a new country, with a new(ish) language, and completely different culture from 1950s New York City, to support him on his mission. And support she did. Extraordinary. As educators, both of them were able to touch and transform the lives of so many around them. Even if it wasn't a massive and visible change over night, the ordinary act of working with students daily was transfigured into something more profound. It was a part of their personal mission through the church.

All of this to say, if I have learned anything from my 25 years in the Episcopal church, ordinary actions we take every day are simply ordinary because we forget what was extraordinary about them. Just as Peter, James, and John forgot about God's proclamation that Jesus was his son and that He was well pleased, until they were supposed to remember.

My challenge to you is to reflect on your days and decide how to make your own actions feel extraordinary, whether it's taking a deep breath before

fussing at a student or child (because many of us aren't gifted with endless patience), or taking a minute to extend gratitude to a co-worker or family member about something they've done recently, or even pressing that snooze button one more time for that extra 8 minutes so you can be a little more refreshed and clear for that big project, meeting, or class you have coming up. There was nothing particularly extraordinary about Peter, James, and John, aside from their faith in God. Even for Peter, that wavered, when he denied Jesus three times. And even though Peter, James, and John fall in fear, that fear is okay, because their ordinary faith is transfigured into something extraordinary. Transfiguration is frightening. And as we enter the season of Lent, and are asked to reflect on ourselves and our faith, which is doubly frightening, we know we are not alone. It takes all of us to respond to God's call and transfigure our ordinary world into something extraordinary. We often choose to transfigure ourselves and our lives by cutting out negative habits: eating less junk food, watching less TV, giving up vices we know are bad for us. The challenge is not to change by cutting out the negatives, but to change by introducing the positives: maybe reading a new book, remembering to make time to meal prep, setting aside a night for loved ones, going out of our way to be kinder to strangers. It's a perfect time to practice resisting the temptation to forget someone's ordinary acts of kindness, and search for the extraordinary in their actions.

Obachan, to you, your life may seem ordinary, but to us, it's been nothing short of extraordinary. You've taught us to walk in grace, love and accept everyone fully, and follow in the footsteps of faith. My mountain top experiences are lackluster compared to the way I have seen and heard of God working through you.

The other day, you shared that the best and most important lesson you've learned from the church and from your faith was that "all of us are the same in the eyes of God". To Him, we are all extraordinary, made in His image. It takes all of us to help one another see how extraordinary we are, especially when we forget and feel simply ordinary.

So, cheers to an extraordinary life! Amen.