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Big game in Macomb County this evening. **Will it be a Mountain Top experience for Richmond** or New Haven? Basket Ball Greats encounter each other this evening. Support your team.

The Transfiguration shows up in each of the synoptics. Take a look and compare. We began this Season of Epiphany with a message out of the clouds and today we hear again from the cloud. The 'happening' shows up three times in the Gospels so you know it is important. Luke and Mark have it in chapter 9 but in Matthew it appears in chapter 17.

Ready, Set, PRESS! (Pray Regularly Expecting Something Supernatural). Now for a simple scotoma test? Recall that scotoma is a form of selective blindness. It means that we see only what we want to see. And scotoma is no respecter of persons. Bottom line; we live stuck with a pre-determined script. About others. And about ourselves. Check out any FedEx truck (or their company logo). Got it? What do you see? I see FedEx in purple and orange. Okay. Look again. This time, pretend you cannot read. This time, you will see an arrow. Clearly, between the E and X. This is interesting, because studies done with illiterate persons show that they see the arrow first, every time. We see what we want to see. So. How do my blinders come off? It has something to do with letting go. When we do let go—of the need to be in control, or the need to be a victim, or the need to carry antagonism and resentment—we learn that we can be grateful for ordinary gifts of grace. Kind words, gentle touch, listening ear, mildewed tablets. Always remember 'kill 'em with kindness'.

And here's the deal: when we live grateful, fueled by grace we are empowered to live not from fear, to not hold back. Wholehearted, we can invest into each moment with care, empathy, watchfulness and humanity.

And this grace always spills to those around us.

In his book *Finding God in Unexpected Places*, Philip Yancey talks about a South African woman named Joanna, who began a prison ministry that radically transformed one of her country's most violent prisons. When Yancey asked her how she did it, she said: "Well, of course, Philip, God was already present in the prison. I just had to make Him visible."

Scotoma healed.

If God is present, there are no unsacred moments... including you and me, flooded stores, mildewed paper, broken children and big generous fishermen. So, let us write new stories about God's light.

There are times when we are the wounded child. And there are times when we are invited to create a safe haven for someone who needs compassion, hope and healing.

I heal my scotoma about others and the world around me, knowing that when I hear stories I have a choice. (No, I do not close my eyes to the pain or the suffering. Nor should we ever.) I have a choice about seeing a deeper or more profound reality underneath the pain and the suffering. A story about brokenness, yes. But more importantly, where is the story about compassion and hope and redemption? And can that restoration and renewal begin with me?

I believe the answer is yes. Let it begin with me. Let Peace Begin With Me. (family all are we).

A Bumper Sticker

I was driving down the street behind a raggedy, dirty car the other day. The muffler was dragging with plenty of smoke coming out, the side-view mirror was held on with duct tape, and the doors were a different color and

dented all over. The driver had the audacity to have a bumper sticker that read, "My other car is a Mercedes." The driver was telling me not to judge him by what he was driving today, because he had something else I didn't know about. When this old earthly tabernacle shall be destroyed, we have another home, not made by hands, eternal with God.

Skillet

I was learning how to fry chicken in my mother's kitchen one day. After we bought the chicken, washed the chicken, seasoned the chicken, and put the flour in the brown paper bag I went to get a skillet. I grabbed her new, Teflon coated, shiny gray skillet. It was pristine - no scratches, no burn marks, no signs of wear or tear. My mother laughed when she saw it in my hand and said, "Son, you can't fry chicken in that skillet. It's never been burned, never been used, never been proven." She grabbed an old black cast iron skillet, full of scratches and all the signs of wear and tear, all evidence of it having been in the fire and come through, and she said, "this skillet I can use!"

Forgiveness

In the book entitled, [A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World](#), a true story is told of a priest in the Philippines, a much-loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years before. He had repented, but still had no peace, no sense of God's forgiveness. In his parish was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ and He with her. The priest, however, was skeptical. To test her he said, "The next time you speak with Christ, I want you to ask Him what sin your priest committed while he was in seminary." The woman agreed. A few days later the priest asked, "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?" "Yes, he did," she replied. "And did you ask him what sin I committed in seminary?" "Yes." "Well, what did he say?" "He said, 'I don't remember.'"

Truth Is a Person

I've been searching a long time for truth. I was a philosophy major in college—Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche—but truth was not to be found in philosophy. I left there and thought I could find truth in black identity. So, I did a program in African Caribbean studies—learned my black history and how we raised

the pyramids over the Nile. I discovered that I could not find truth there. I went to seminary—I thought that in the tracks of theology and the original languages of the Bible, I could find truth. There was some truth there, but my soul was not at rest. I began to pastor, and I thought that in the fellowship of the saints I could find truth. I found some, but my soul was still not at rest. I went into counseling and therapy; I went back and got more degrees. Finally, I discovered what my Sunday school teacher had told me: Truth was a person. I did not have to ascend to heaven; I did not have to cross the sea. The truth was nigh unto me; it was in my mouth and in my heart. Truth was a person, and truth's name is Jesus.

-Thomas, Frank

Frank Thomas was at one of the Fall Gatherings, great guy, great speaker.

The Gatekeeper

The Great Wall of China took hundreds of years to build by many generations of Manchurians and other Chinese. It was built to keep the enemy and other tribes from invading them. It is 2600 miles long and it is the only man-made object on earth that can be seen from the moon. It's humongous. However, when the enemy came to invade China they did not have to deal with that long multilayered wall. The enemy simply paid off the gatekeeper and the gatekeeper opened the gate and let in the enemy. Most of us spend our lives building walls to keep the enemy out, to keep from being influenced in the wrong way or to keep from dealing with this and that. But there are certain people you give your heart to who are in actuality your gatekeepers. Be careful who you let into your inner circle because the grand and great walls around your life are ineffective if the one you trusts works for the enemy.

Steadfastness

Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, received an invitation to speak to the student body of a boarding school of his youth that kicked him out and told him he would never amount to anything. Mr. Churchill accepted the invitation. After he was properly introduced and presented, the prime minister stood up with his glass frames on his nose, looked around at the faces in the audience, and after feeling he had their undivided attention, said, "Never

give up! Never give up! I say, never give up!" And he sat down.

Had Mr. Churchill given up after the school officials kicked him out in his youth he would not have become Prime Minister of Great Britain.

When Your Dad Is the Pilot...

A large jetliner was taking passengers to their destination when they went through some terrible turbulence. The plane went up and down, shaking and losing altitude. Everyone on the plane was hollering and screaming, except a little girl who sat directly behind the cockpit. When everything returned to normal a lady sitting next to the little girl leaned over and said, "I'm impressed by your calmness. Everybody else on the plane was really upset, but you sat there as if everything was alright. Why were you so calm?" The little girl replied, "I wasn't afraid because my daddy is flying the plane and he promised me we would make it home safely."

Act Before You See It

When the meteorologist predicts the weather, we act on that prediction, basing our choices on what we have heard. We act like it is going to rain before the rain comes, until it comes. If the weather forecaster say there's a hurricane coming, you start acting like it is coming before you see it. You go to the store and start buying bread, water, and all that stuff. You act like you've seen it before you've seen it, until you see it. All that is based—not on what you've seen—but it's based on what you've heard. That's what faith is. Faith is acting like you've seen it before you've seen it, until you see it.



Looking forward to Lent and spring and hoping some will join me in fasting and prayer for wisdom. Fasting doesn't have to be from food. Maybe you will give up lunches out and give the saved to a charity. Some may want to give the Daniel Fast a try, fruit, vegetables, and nuts. Not much menu planning! Decide if raw or cooked, pretty easy, isn't it?

*April 7 at 3:00 wow, it is here!
That is when Richmond UCC*

with the Michigan Conference and Eastern Association will Ordain and Install me as pastor. I am so humbled and excited. Each week I prepare for the sermon, have the text, and give it to the Holy Spirit for delivery. Prep begins on Monday and still on Sunday I find myself making changes. I do gnaw on it all week!

Our Wednesday's of Lent is an open invite to any and all beginning with a simple supper, and followed by a meditation and quiet time. We experience so little time to just BE so this is your chance. Invite another to come with you. Be grateful, the First Sunday of Lent brings us back to 'daylight savings time'. Ash Wednesday is March 6.

Decide on a discipline and get it going. You will feel the blessing and experience peace, hope and joy. KatieD 2/18/2019