Grace and peace from God my Father and my Lord Jesus Crist. Amen.

Well, my sermon changed on Monday when News 10 broke in to mention there were shots fired and people at or around MSU were asked to stay in place. My immediate thoughts went to those people I know that are students or teachers and a quick prayer for their safety and comfort. As it turned out, a lone gunman named Anthony McRae aged 43 with no known affiliation to MSU shot and killed multiple students at MSU before taking his own life. What an unspeakable tragedy. This is a time where our prayers go out all who were wounded and lost their lives and their families and the MSU students, parents, faculty, and staff member along with first responders affected by these events Also the community which will need to mourn, process this and try to heal. We also read where Keith Appling, who was a MSU basketball star, pled guilty to second degree murder. Here’s the thing. We spend our lives trying to ignore the evil that is ever present but when something like this happens it pulls back the curtain on that evil so it cannot be ignored as we cannot ignore the bad things we and others do that destroy a right relationship with God and neighbor.

As we tried to process this, I started to think about the Transfiguration worship which was coming on Sunday. But instead my thoughts turned to Iour tradition were we not only pray for the victims but also the perpetrator to which many may ask why. The answer to that is we are all capable of such an act because we are human and we all fall short of the glory of God. Psalm 130 says:

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; Therefore, you are revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits. In his word, I hope.

Also, we could be righteous and say we would never stoop to murder. Then we reflect on Jesus comments on murder we heard in last week’s gospel. When, in the 5th Commandment, God said “thou shall not murder” that sounds like a good basic law that allows us to live in a right relationship with one another and with God. But Jesus explains the intent of this law when he says we should not become angry enough to murder - if we do we have committed murder in our heart. It is not only the killing which is a sinful but also anger they had towards the one they harmed because. Jesus says it violates Jesus commandment to love one another as he has loved us. Anger against someone can be a dangerous emotion which can leap out of control and lead to physical violence, emotional violence and spiritual damage. Anthony McRae’s brother has depicted him as angry and bitter after he lost his mother. Martin Luther explains in these excerpts from the 5th Commandment in his Large Catechism: “God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness; therefore, He has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the evil. …we must live among many people who do us harm, so that we have cause to be hostile to them. God wishes to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor, and to accustom us ever to keep in view this commandment, always to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and invocation of His name to commit to Him the wrong which we suffer. Thus, we shall suffer our enemies to rage and be angry, doing what they can, and we learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, that is, our enemies. It is God’s ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show him all good and love; and, as we have said it is specially directed toward those who are our enemies. For to do good to our friends is but an ordinary heathen virtue as Christ says in Matt. 5:46 46For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”

Now, I would like to discuss how the Transformationhelps us. Evil in itself is overwhelming. It can be so large and overwhelming. How do we deal with it? Listen to today’s narrative. When Jesus took his three closest disciples on the mountain by themselves (mountains in scripture are places people go to be closer to God) Jesus was transfigured right before the disciples. Jesus face shined as the sun and his clothes were brighter than light itself. This was not something from a laundry soap commercial but rather something that signified something special. Then they saw two people in person that were part of history. Moses, the most important prophet of the Israelites who wrote the Torah and led people out of slavery. Also, Elijah, a mighty prophet during turbulent times in Israel’s history who was sent to show Israel the evil of their ways and encourage them to return to the Lord. They both represent the Old Covenant and were talking with Jesus, the New Covenant.Impetuous Peter said he would set up 3 tents for them but was interrupted by abright cloudwhich overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” At Jesus baptism God had said “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased” but adds “Listen to him.” God declares this is beloved Son-the divine Son of God. The disciples were overwhelmed with fear and fell to the ground but Jesus came and touched and comforted them and told them not to be afraid and poof, the Old Covenant prophets who represented the law were gone and only the New Covenant, Jesus, who was the New Testament remains and forgive their sins. Jesus asked them not to tell anyone since people would not understand. It is clear from Jesus action that he did not want himself to stay on the mountain but to go where the people are and to help those who are in need. We know ow Jesus defeated death. It is Jesus and his words that offer us hope in despair and life in the face of death. Jesus came to us as a baby to be with us and join us in the messiness of humanness. When we have this messy tragedy, we look to Christ who clams us, cares for us and offers us hope and comfort and eternal life. Amen.