

Hero Worship
Matthew 17:1-9
Ypsilanti First United Methodist Church
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Have you noticed that most of the successful movies in Hollywood involve some kind of hero? Have you noticed too, that the heroes in today's movies often have superpowers? Think of Superman, Batman and Spiderman, the X-men. And then there are the fantastic four, a group of astronauts who gained superpowers after cosmic radiation. And there was even a cartoon movie about a whole family of superheroes (Mom, Dad and the kids) called The Incredibles. In this family, each member had special powers and they worked together to rid the world of evil.

The truth is that we love stories about heroes. Especially heroes who conquer all kinds of obstacles and odds, and who save themselves and the world. Some of us may be hoping that today in the Super Bowl, quarterbacks Tom Brady or Eli Manning do something heroic. We love heroes. One of the most popular TV shows these days is called Heroes—it's on NBC—And in the show, normal people find that they have superhuman powers, and the fate of the entire world rests on their shoulders.

And many newscasts now have a regular segment called Hometown heroes, where they feature local folks, who stand out for their service and valor.

The truth is that we love heroes and we love watching them and being inspired by them.

I bring this up because in our scripture text for today when Peter sees Jesus talking with two heroes of his faith, Moses and Elijah, he gets pretty pumped up. On that mountain top, everything kind of comes together for Peter and he sees Jesus as a hero. Jesus as Messiah. Jesus as the One. Jesus the Anointed.

And Peter is very excited about this heroic Jesus and in his excitement he is all ready to build these three special booths-- to honor and worship these heroes of the faith—Moses, Elijah and Jesus.

But while he is going on and on about the heroes, we hear the same voice from above that spoke at Jesus baptism—telling us that Jesus is God's beloved son and that God is pleased with him, and lights shine down. Cue the hero music. And the Shazam kind of moment.

Just as Peter and John get caught up in the hero worship of Jesus, the hero visions disappear and they are left with just Jesus standing in front of them, and telling them to not be afraid.

And they come down from the mountain top, and go about the business of life and ministry, with their hero Jesus. You see Jesus is a different kind of hero—the kind who works to unveil and unleash the hero in each of us.

This is not what we are comfortable with—we would much rather stand and gaze at Jesus—admiring his cape. He's the one! He's the one with the Heroic Task! We are much more comfortable waiting for the big hero to come in and save the day.

But the truth is that Jesus tells us that we are the ones with the superpowers. We are the heroes and Jesus is calling to each of us to be Christ for others—Rather than be this larger than life savior, Jesus' ministry was and is about unleashing the hero in each of us—calling us to be heroes for others—calling us to use our talents and powers to make a difference, to right the wrongs, and to save the world.

In the first episode of NBC's hit show *Heroes*, one of the characters is in a taxi cab and asks the cab driver "do you ever get the feeling that you were meant for something special?"

It's a good question. And on this Sunday when we celebrate with heroes on the gridiron, and that moment on the mountaintop with Jesus, Moses and Elijah—I ask you-- Do you "Ever get that feeling? That feeling that you were meant for something special?"

The truth is that while Jesus is a hero, he calls us to be the ones to do the work of ministry—he calls us to stand in his name, to offer love and justice, freedom and peace. And he tells us "You were designed for something greater — the greatness of living to love others."

This is the whole point of Jesus' ministry—not that we will worship him as a hero, but rather that we will understand that through him we are called to be heroes—to share our talents, our gifts for the love of others and to inspire them to be heroes as well.

the best way to show our love for Jesus is for us to love others—
"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, Jesus says latter in Matthew's text.

I was naked and you clothed me, a stranger and you welcomed me, in prison and you visited me—whatever you do for the least of them who are my sisters and brothers, you also do for me.” (Mt. 25)

Jesus doesn't call us to hero worship, but rather to be heroes in his name—reminding us that we are designed for something greater—the greatness of living to love others.

In her book [A Return to Love](#), Author and teacher Marianne Williamson puts it this way:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Rather than worship Jesus as hero—Jesus call us to be the hero.

Rather than playing small, Jesus calls us to live the life we are called to—to shine and manifest God's glory.

It is not about hero worship—but rather about being the hero, in Jesus name—so that his glory, his love, his justice and his peace liberate us all.

The truth is that we are the kind of superheroes who can truly change the world. Amen.