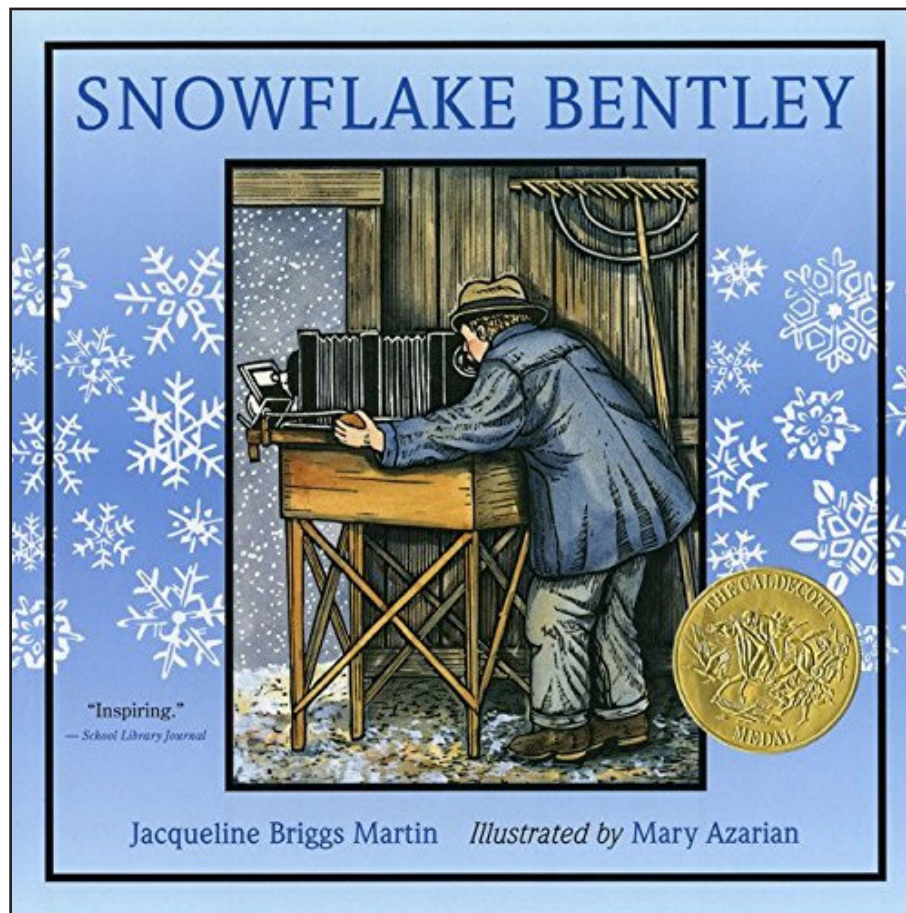


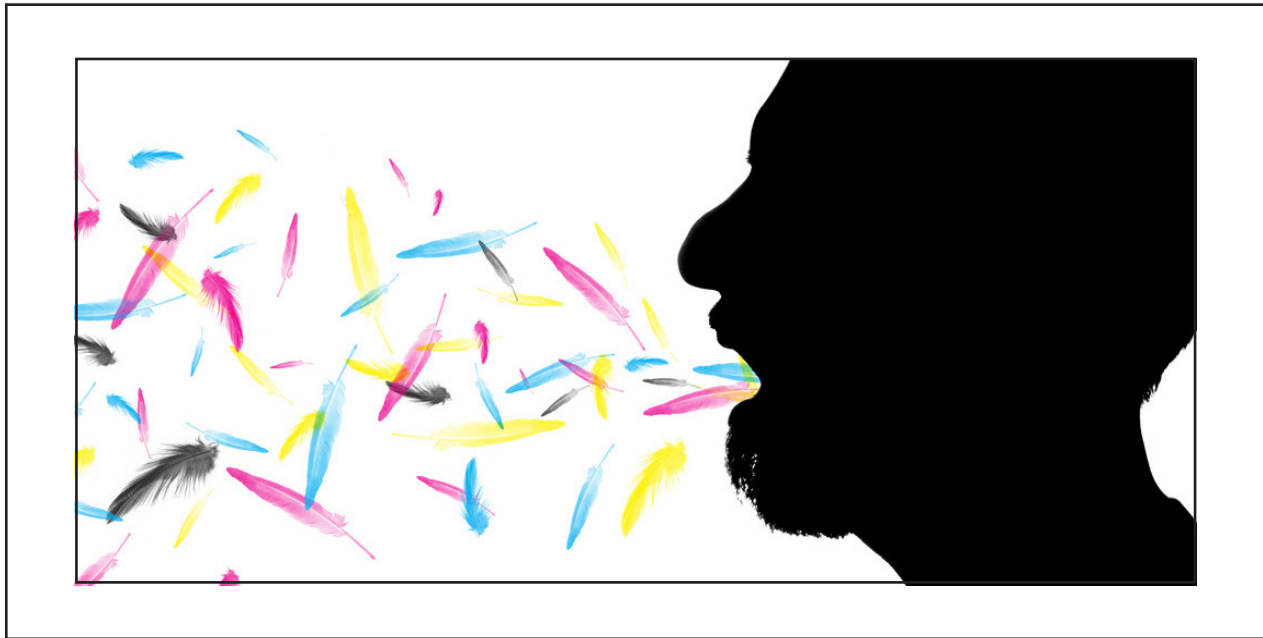
Living Grace

CYCLE C 4TH SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

“DARING TO STAND OUT FOR OTHERS”



***Snowflake Bentley** tells the true story of the first known snowflake photographer, Wilson Bentley. From the time he was a small boy in Vermont, Wilson saw snowflakes as small miracles, and he determined that one day his camera would capture for others the wonder of the tiny crystal. Bentley's enthusiasm for photographing snowflakes was often misunderstood in his time, as many people had no interest in what he was up to, but his patience and determination revealed two important truths: no two snowflakes are alike, and each one is startlingly beautiful. This story gives us insight into a soul who had a scientist's vision and perseverance, and whose love of snow and careful camera work, expanded both natural science and photography.*



GUARDING WORDS AND ACTIONS

Photograph by Stephen Poff, 2009

EXPLORING THE ART:

This image is based on the concept of "Guarding Words And Actions" meaning that we should mind what we say and do, for the consequences of even the smallest things, can be very significant. What we say and do can have a big impact for good or for ill, and it is our responsibility to make sure that what comes out of our mouths, comes from our hearts. Our faith helps us work on healing our hearts, so that what comes out of our mouths is filled with the Spirit of God. It is so hard to avoid "going along with the crowd" if we don't keep clarity in our minds and peace in our hearts.

To create this image, the artist used a photography technique called "strobism" which uses small flashes of light in manual mode off camera to achieve different styles of lighting effects. He used his own silhouette by firing these small flashes of light against a white wall behind him, and keeping himself much further in the foreground, out of the light. He then created the feathers in the background using a digital brush on a computer.

This piece of art was originally chosen to represent Jesus' speak, but look how nicely it ties into the photography aspect of our children's book, Snowflake Bentley!

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



ABIDE IN ME

Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

~ John 7:7-9

Read-aloud video link:

[SNOWFLAKE BENTLEY](#)

Written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin & Illustrated by Mary Azarian

Sunday Gospel

LUKE 4:21-30

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying:
"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."
And all spoke highly of him
and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.
They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?"
He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb,
'Physician, cure yourself,' and say,
'Do here in your native place
the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'"
**And he said, "Amen, I say to you,
no prophet is accepted in his own native place.**
Indeed, I tell you,
there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah
when the sky was closed for three and a half years
and a severe famine spread over the entire land.
It was to none of these that Elijah was sent,
but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.
Again, there were many lepers in Israel
during the time of Elisha the prophet;
yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."
When the people in the synagogue heard this,
they were all filled with fury.
They rose up, drove him out of the town,
and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town had been built,
to hurl him down headlong.
But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

HONORING OUR LOVED ONES WHO MAKE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD...OR NOT!?

In the Gospel and our children's story this week, Jesus and Snowflake Bentley both followed their inner inspirations to call forth their unique God-given gifts. Many did not understand what was driving them, especially those that were in closest proximity.

In the gospel story, Luke tells us that Jesus' community is initially "wowed" by him. They knew he was the son of Joseph the carpenter, and while the normal expectations would be that he would follow in his father's trade, they were amazed at how the words of scripture gracefully flowed off his lips. He did not just "speak the words" he was reading, but it seemed that the words were somehow "within" him. They had also heard that he had been healing people and working miracles in other towns. In our children's story, Willie Bentley had an unusually strong gift of wonder and appreciation of nature and beauty. In his community, nobody else cared about what he was doing. People were busy working and farming, and it seemed like Willie was just wasting time. "Snow in Vermont is as common as dirt," people would say. Meanwhile, Willie persevered in his passion, maybe even knowing that somehow this would be his gift to the world.

We can tell a lot about towns and families by how they treat their own people. In our children's story and Gospel this week, we see two very contrasting responses to the "stand-outs" of their community. After reading the words of the scroll, Jesus tried to explain his own God-given call and purpose. He says, "I do not come on my own, nor do these works on my own. It is our heavenly Father who has sent me. I am not the first one sent as a prophet among you." He also refers to other prophets from Jewish history, Elijah and Elisha, who worked miracles outside their own communities. The people in Jesus' hometown reacted violently to his explanation. He was turning everything upside down and pushing them out of their comfort zone. This is God that he is talking about, and Jesus is just the son of a simple carpenter. If Jesus doesn't comply with tradition, they want him out of here. They cannot open their minds or hearts to the freedom and healing that is being offered to them through Jesus. Therefore, Jesus can work no miracles in his very own community.

Jesus and Snowflake Bentley were both isolated and mistreated by those that they loved the most. But over time, people's eyes were opened to the great and lasting contributions they made. This is what it means to have prophetic gifts. Prophetic gifts tend to be not so much for the immediate era and community of that person, but have a greater purpose for the future and the whole world.

How do we love and support those with unique gifts around us? How might we work to appreciate that each of God's children are like snowflakes, made uniquely with great love and care? How can we help our children to be more aware and supportive of the unique and exceptional gifts in others and in our own family? How might we ourselves find the courage to follow God's spirit from within, trusting that we each have a gift to give?

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Who has lived where there is snow? Do you remember what it's like looking at individual snowflakes on windows? Did you find them magical? What things do you find magical that maybe no one else notices the way you do? Is it hard to share your excitement and wonder? Do you know people that "see" things that you don't really notice or get excited about? How do you treat them?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: How was Snowflake Bentley treated? Did his family understand and help him?

THE GOSPEL STORY: How about Jesus? How was he treated? Did his family and friends understand and support him?

Our gifts are not just for our families or communities, but for the life and healing of the world. How can we encourage each other to celebrate and honor the unique calls of those we love, even when at the time, we don't fully understand how everything will work out in the end? How can we listen more carefully and openly to people who see new perspectives and have unique gifts? How can you encourage others to do so as well?

Biblical Background

LUKE 4:21-30

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: This scene continues from last week in the synagogue in Nazareth. This is one of the seven synagogues located in Galilee in the time of Jesus. Nazareth is a small village located just off the major trade route of the ancient Near East known as the Via Maris or The Way of the Sea. This trade route allowed access to travelers coming north from Egypt and South from Damascus. It was a well-traveled route in the ancient world of Jesus.

TERMS: Son of Joseph Nazareth is the village where Jesus was “raised” from about the age of 7 until the opening of his public ministry at the age of 30, and he would have been well known in the village. He was the only son of Joseph and Mary, and sons were expected to carry on their father’s work.

Teknon This is the title of the ancient work done by a general contractor who could work equally well with stone and wood. Most buildings were made of stone. Working with Joseph, Jesus would have mastered this craft by his middle teen years.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Jesus is invited to read and comment upon a portion of the prophet Isaiah’s writings. As we learned last week, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is known to have been 36 feet long, so Jesus would have had to find his way to the end of the text. It would have taken a long time for him to roll the scroll out to find the proper text for that Saturday morning service, which would have built tension and anticipation in the crowd. Jesus read from the passage in Isaiah, and then proclaims that the text he just read had been “fulfilled in their hearing” - claiming that he was the Messiah! This is quite shocking to those who heard him make this bold statement.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: “All spoke well of him.” A better translation of the original language would be “all spoke about him, a person they knew well”. This would suggest that they knew Jesus, and that he was NOT a candidate for the role of Messiah. “They were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.” In translation, “they were shocked that such blasphemy could flow so smoothly from the lips of Jesus to the ears of those in the synagogue that morning”. The words of Jesus - his claiming to be the Messiah - would explain the violent response of those in the synagogue. Nazareth was always a hotbed of political revolution. Hotheads rose up, drove him out of the synagogue and out of the town, with the implied intention of pushing him over the cliffs. Jesus realizes their intent and says “enough” with the authority of a full-grown man. Jesus had been rejected in his own hometown. He takes his mother and goes to Capernaum, where he will move into the home of Peter, Andrew, and their father John.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Can you identify someone that you know who has a gift or insight that might only be fully understood in the future? How can you make an effort to offer encouragement and appreciation? Talk about the term “prophetic voices”. Do you have a new understanding of what this means?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: TOLERANCE FOR UNIQUENESS
FOLLOWING GOD’S LEADINGS

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Make a collage of people that made unique contributions to the world. As a family, talk about the way their contributions have made the world a better place for those who came after them. Who are the people who have been “prophetic voices” in your lifetime? Your parents’ lifetime? Your grandparents’ lifetimes?