

Luke 9:28-36
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth 03/03/2019
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Grace, peace, and glory to you from Father God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit. "Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory..." [Luke 9:28-31]. "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" [2 Corinthians 3:18]. Let's pray...

Most of us get out of bed in the morning, go into the bathroom, and look in a mirror. (If you're like me, you approach this activity with a tentative mixture of curiosity and fear). We might check our hair, our makeup, our teeth, our clothes, our pimples. Mirrors show us our external appearance. Mirrors reflect our image. Mirrors show us what we look like, don't they.

And the Law of Moses holds up a different kind of mirror before us. The Law is a mirror that reflects our true nature, and makes us aware that we fall short of the glory of God. The mirror of the Law reminds us that the image reflected is one tainted by sin. It forces us to see that we are gloriously imperfect.

And yet, while it is important to remember what we look like and to be aware of our sinful nature, it's more important to know who we are in Christ. We are so much more than what we see reflected in a mirror. That's what this holy Feast of the Transfiguration is about. The transfiguration of Christ shows us who we really are. It reveals our origin, our purpose, and the glory of Christ into whose likeness we are being transformed.

The Transfiguration reminds us of the original beauty within creation and humanity that God deems to be $\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\ \iota\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$; [“very good,” or more emphatically; “exceedingly/mightily well-favoured”]. This means that the Transfiguration is not just an event in history. It is instead, an ongoing condition or way of being. The Transfiguration reveals a present reality. The Transfiguration is part of us and the world.

Do you understand the significance of this, dearly beloved? It means that the glorified and transfigured Christ is the divine revelation of our own creation adventure.

That’s a pretty bold statement when you consider recent events. Deaths from drug overdose at music festivals. Pro-abortion and euthanasia legislation. Cover-ups in the Church. Royal Commissions into everything. The Adelaide Fringe. Let’s not forget the needless incineration of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the inconceivable waste of 70-85 million lives in World War 2. That’s every man, woman, and child in Australia, three times over.

From that perspective, wouldn’t you say that our lives and the world are more disfigured, than transfigured. That does not, however, undo or negate the glory of God that fills this world and human life. Instead, these events reveal that far too often we are a people “weighed down with sleep.”

Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up the mountain to pray. While Jesus was praying “the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.” Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared in glory and began talking to Jesus. Through all this, the disciples were “weighed down with sleep.”

The three disciples struggled between sleep and wakefulness. “But since they had stayed awake,” they saw Jesus’ glory. Jesus permitted Peter, John, and James a glimpse of his divine glory. And in so doing, Jesus revealed to them the deepest reality of who they were and would become.

Likewise, our spiritual adventure is always a battle between falling asleep and staying awake, between absence and presence, between darkness and light. Sleepiness is not simply a physical matter, it is a spiritual issue and condition. Spiritual sleep is a form of blindness. It blinds us to the beauty and holiness of the world, other people, and ourselves. Blindness to God's presence in the world and the goodness of creation, is what leads us to do violence to one another and vandalise our planet.

Peter, John, and James experienced the transfiguration of Christ because they stayed awake despite the weight of sleep. They saw for the first time what has always been. They saw the light of divinity fully manifest in a human being, something a mirror can never reveal.

Peter misunderstood, however. "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Could you blame him? After all, when Jesus called his disciples to follow him, they saw amazing things. They saw water turned into wine. They saw the blind, crippled and sick healed. They saw people raised from the dead. They saw Jesus walk on the water. They saw multitudes of people fed with five loaves and two fish. Now on the mountain, they witness the glory of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel. What an experience! We would want to stay too. We would want that moment to last forever.

However, the reality remains - humanity can never build a dwelling place for God. The mystery that the Transfiguration reveals is this: God chose to make humanity the dwelling place of divinity, in Christ. Can you believe that? God chose to make us his home. This is most profoundly revealed in the transfiguration of Jesus.

Friends, to stay on the mountain means to miss out on the complete picture, because there's not one mountain in view in the Transfiguration story, but two. That's why Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about his ἔξοδον ["departure"], which he was about to accomplish. The summit in the background of the Transfiguration

is Jerusalem, where Jesus will be crucified, buried, and resurrected, to bring us into glory. So we need to follow Jesus back down the mountain to complete life's adventure.

The whole of creation participates in the glory of God. Humanity alone, however, is called to the Mount of Transfiguration. It is there that Christ reveals who we are and who, by grace, we are to become. On the mirror's surface we see only partly what we truly are, but when we follow Jesus through the valley of death and up to Jerusalem for the last time, we will see finally, who we really are, fully glorified, fully reflecting the image of God in whom we have been made. As St Paul says in [1 Corinthians 13:12], "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

Brothers and Sisters, God is not hidden from us by any veil on our faces or hearts; we are permitted regular glimpses of his unutterable glory. We see it in Christ when he is preached to us, hear him when he speaks to us from Scripture, feel his presence when he kisses us on the lips in Holy Communion. We see his glory also in each other, in the way we comfort, console, and lovingly serve each other.

When we see that glory, when we see Christ, we ourselves are transformed. Every day we are changed by the people we meet. For good or ill they leave their imprint on us, and the stronger their personality, as it were, the greater their impact. How much greater then the imprint and impact of the risen Jesus!

If husbands and wives grow more like one another as the years go by, how much more shall we live with Christ and his people be changed into his likeness. But just as we cannot save ourselves, so we cannot change ourselves into his likeness. Only the power of the risen Christ can accomplish genuine and lasting change in us.

Through Christ we are changed from one degree of glory to another, until at last we are entirely transformed into his likeness and glory. It is as St Paul says, "All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of

the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" [2 Corinthians 3:18].

The Feast of the Transfiguration invites us to wipe the sleep from our eyes, behold what we truly are, and follow Christ through the valley of the shadow of death to resurrected glory.

So, look! Look at the mirror and see who it is that Jesus loves and died for, then, dare to contemplate the wonder of who God created you to be. Friends, the best is yet to come! Amen.