

“THE TRANSFIGURATION”

Luke 9:28-36

Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

February 18, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

This is one of the mystical accounts in the life of Jesus.

**Jesus has separated Himself from all but the three disciples
who have become closest to Him:
Peter, James and John.**

**Jesus has gone to a mountain to pray,
and there, mystical things happen.
He is *transfigured*.**

The word is *transfigured*; not *transformed*.

**When a caterpillar crawls into a cocoon
and then reemerges as a butterfly –
that’s transformation.**

It began as one thing and then became something different.

**When Jesus went up that mountain,
He went as fully human and fully divine.**

**When he was *transfigured*
the disciples were able to see who he really was.**

**The disciples were able to see Jesus
as God sees Jesus.**

So, what are we to make of this account of Jesus’ transfiguration?

**We are pretty certain
that Luke used the account of the event in Mark's gospel
and then added a few details to it
to tie it more closely to other events in Luke's Gospel.**

**Scholars do not agree on whether this was a supernatural event
or if it was something the early Church included
to affirm the church's confession
that Jesus was the Messiah, Son of God.**

**What matters most to us is
"What is God trying to tell us through this?"**

JESUS' WITHDRAWAL TO PRAY WITH THREE DISCIPLES

The first question we are faced with is:

Why Peter, James and John?

Why these three disciples?

Was there something special about them?

The answer is "Yes."

**They were witnesses to the epiphanies of Jesus,
the raising of Jarius' daughter,
and later, the prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane.**

They would eventually be very influential in the early church.

**They were singled out and invited to Join Jesus
as he withdrew to a mountain top to pray.**

**And according to the Bible,
when Jesus prays, things happen.**

Luke records that at Jesus' baptism, He was praying

“And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” Luke 3:21-22

THE EVENT:

**Luke does not dwell on what happened to Jesus;
other than to show that the power of prayer
brings with it the presence of God.**

Prayer confirms the presence of God.

Just a side note here.

**Too often in our prayers, we speak *AT* God
and never give God a chance to speak *TO* us.**

**We get in such a hurry,
our need is so great
that we rush into and out of prayer
never giving God an opportunity to speak to us.**

**Next time you are praying . . .
pause long enough to listen to and for God.**

**Every so often, someone will ask me:
“Do you really *hear* God?”
The answer is always: “Yes.”**

**Oh, I don’t hear voices in my head . . .
. . . well, maybe I do, but they aren’t God.**

**God speaks in a voice as still and small as a springtime breeze –
the kind that just barely moves the curtains.
The voice is a thought that is so startling,**

**so far beyond what I would normally think,
so far beyond my own intelligence and experience
that it has to be God.**

**Usually, when I try to explain this, I hear something like:
“I never hear God.”**

**The follow up question is obvious:
When is the last time you *listened*!?!**

**If you will set aside time to listen to God,
you will be amazed at what will happen.**

**THE APPEARANCE OF MOSES AND ELIJAH:
Back to the mountain, Jesus and the disciples.**

Suddenly, two men appear to the disciples: Moses and Elijah,

**Some scholars argue this is a reference to law and prophets.
Moses being the giver of the Law,
Elijah being the representative of all prophets.**

**To fully understand the significance of Moses and Elijah,
one must be familiar with Jewish thought.**

**Moses was a precursor for Jesus,
he had also experienced a mountaintop experience,
his face shone from that encounter.**

And not only was Moses a lawgiver but also a prophet.

Elijah was not only a prophet

**but he also related the law of Moses
and affirmed that keeping the law
would one day turn the people's heart
back to the covenant.**

**Moses pointed to the past;
Elijah pointed to the future.**

**Both departed this world unnaturally;
Moses was alone and buried in the wilderness by God;
Elijah was taken up to heaven.**

So, their presence is significant and filled with meaning.

PETER'S RESPONSE:

**When Moses and Elijah withdrew,
Peter responded, suggesting they erect 3 booths;
alluding to fulfillment of Israel's wilderness wandering
and Feast of Booths (Tabernacle).**

This is only a partial understanding of the significance of the event.

**First of all,
to erect three booths would put all three on an equal basis.**

**Second, to attempt to freeze the moment,
commemorate the event and place,
to memorialize and capture the moment
would be impossible.**

Discipleship is not a continuous mountain-top experience.

**It calls us *from* the mountain into the trenches of human need –
both spiritual and physical.**

**We can gain strength, faith, direction from such experiences,
but we cannot hope to capture them or re-create them.**

Consider this:

**Just because a healing occurs in a church on Friday evening,
does not mean we should schedule a healing service
every Friday evening.**

**Too often we want to capture a special event –
to memorialize it; to hang onto it.**

When God is trying to call us into a better future.

VOICE FROM THE CLOUD:

Moses and Elijah departed;

**suggesting that Jesus has superseded both law and prophets.
and a voice speaks from a cloud:**

“This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

**This echoes what was said at Jesus’ baptism;
it affirms the question of Jesus’ identity.**

**Jesus is both the unique son of God
and the chosen servant in whom God delighted
and through whom God would bring salvation.**

And there is a command: “Hear Him!”

Henry David Thoreau once said:

**“We live lives of quiet desperation;”
to that I would add we are hoping to experience
God’s presence in our daily lives.**

**Indeed, there are times when God calls us to retreat in prayer, to
meditate and to rest.**

**Like a hiker in the wilderness,
we pause and climb a tree, trying to get a fix on our location
and an idea of where we need to go.**

**We are searching for guidance
and trying to make sense of our lives.**

**We may find in the midst of a struggle
that the nature and purpose of God becomes clear
in ways that transcend ordinary experience.**

“Hear him!”

The message was clear:

**Listen to what Jesus has been telling you!
He has been saying He needs to go to Jerusalem
to finish His work.**

**He has been telling you about the grace of God,
the willingness of God to forgive,
that God is a God of love.**

Hear him!

DISCIPLES RESPONSE:

**Obviously, the impact of all this had little influence on the disciples
beyond the moment.**

**They still didn't understand the need for Jesus to go to Jerusalem,
there to die for our sins.**

**In spite of witnessing this event,
Peter still denies Jesus,
the others still look for an earthly kingdom.**

**They look for a military messiah,
one who will rid them of Roman oppression,**

They look for a king;

**a restoration of the kingdom of Israel,
a return to the days of King David.**

**You would think an experience like this would be life-changing.
Some of us are just hard-headed.**

**We are so self-involved – so engrossed in our own world
that we fail to see truth when it is presented.**

OUR RESPONSE:

What should our response be?

**Moments like these are not meant to be perpetuated;
they are meant to affirm the direction
in which we are living
or to call us from paths of unrighteousness.**

It's called "stepping out in faith."

**From time to time,
we may experience the awesome presence of God in our lives –
we may experience a great increase in our faith;
a great understanding
of what God is calling us to be and to do.**

That is not a place to pause!

**We are blessed to live in an area that has some magnificent views.
With mountains and valleys that are gorgeous.**

**One of the breath-taking views is just south of War Eagle Mill
on High Sky Inn Road.**

**There is a panoramic view of a valley there
that deserves a longer look than just driving by.**

From time to time, when we see such views,

**we may even pull to the side of the road
and park in an overlook
just to enjoy the panoramic view.**

**The view from the overlook may be majestic;
but the road beckons – God beckons -
and there will be other vistas
and other transforming experiences ahead.**

**We stand on the brink of Lent –
at time to reflect on the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

**We must seek God’s presence among us
to help us clearly see – and understand –
who Jesus was and what His ultimate mission would be.**

May God bless us with that vision and understanding.

PRAYER:

**Holy God, mighty and immortal, you are beyond our knowing,
yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ, whose compassion
illuminates the world.**

**Transform us into the likeness of the love of Christ, who renewed
our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, the same Jesus
Christ, our Lord, who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**