

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36

“One Truth”

Today's Holy Gospel is like none other. It reveals to us a most extraordinary event - the Transfiguration. Three of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all mention the Transfiguration and so it is a question we have just got to ask: “Why did the event take place?”

In Luke 9:18-20. Jesus is alone with his disciples at prayer at Caesarea Philippi and He asks them: “*Who do the crowds say I am?*” *They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”* Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah right then and there.

I believe that God the Father wanted to give His answer to this question once and for all with simple and clear words after Jesus is transfigured, saying, “*This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.*” (Luke 9:35) Jesus took the three disciples - Peter, James and John to a mountain – which I believe is Mount Hermon – right near Caesarea Philippi –the place where Peter proclaimed Jesus the Christ as the Messiah – the Son of the Living God.

At the Transfiguration, three amazing things took place:

- Jesus' human bodily appearance was transformed and glowing.
- Moses and Elijah appeared with Him on the mountain and
- God the Father audibly spoke to the disciples

The Holy Gospel tells us “*As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.*” (Luke 9:29)

There had been a lot of speculation about who Jesus is, but now God the Father, Himself, reveals to all mankind, something very clear about who Jesus is, His eternal glory. God the Father gives the disciples visual evidence of who Jesus truly is. He shows them the Glory of His Christ; the glory of the Son of God. God shows them Jesus transfigured; bathed in what can best be described as “dazzling white.” In today's Old Testament lesson taken from the Book of Exodus – we read how Moses witnessed the Glory of God – and because of it – his face was absolutely shining. Just being near His glory was enough to cause Moses to have to wear a veil before others.

Luke's Gospel also tells us of the heavenly visitors: “*Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.*” (Luke 9:30-31)

The Greek word used for Jesus' departure is ἔξοδον (exodon) which brings to mind the word “Exodus.” In the Gospels, there are important reminders for us about the first Exodus, when Moses brought the children of Israel out of slavery of Egypt, which we will remember on

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Maundy Thursday in our parish hall, as we celebrate our Seder Dinner That Exodus was remembered each year by the killing of a Passover Lamb. The new Exodus – the freeing of God’s people from the slavery of sin - would come with Jesus’ death on the Cross and his resurrection in Jerusalem. I think it is pretty clear that Jesus is the Passover Lamb of the New Exodus, and the one who was pointed to in the Holy Scripture account of the first Exodus.

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. After God the Father has spoken, Moses and Elijah disappear and Jesus alone remains. You could say that the Law and the Prophets have served their turn and they pass away. Now, Jesus, is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets, and He alone remains as our means of salvation.

Jesus is the one who fulfills the Old Covenant and brings about the New Covenant. On that mountain, that day, a new era was on the horizon. The Old Covenant, represented by Moses and Elijah was going to pass away and the new Covenant was going to come, through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This new Covenant of the relationship with Jesus – and the partaking in that New Covenant through His Body and Blood is the most precious gift that we, the believers of who Jesus is, have been given.

Finally, Luke’s Gospel says: *“While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.”* (Luke 9:34-36) God the Father simply says these words, *“This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!”* Jesus – the chosen One, the only Son of God!

In the world and most certainly in parts of the church today – the true identity of Jesus has become a divisive issue:

- Is Jesus the Son of God - that God the Father proclaimed on the mountain that day, or is He someone else?
- Is Jesus the one who required repentance for sin – and then provided forgiveness – or is He someone else?
- Is Jesus the one who sacrificed Himself – on the hard wood of the cross – so that *“whoever believes in Him – shall not perish – but have eternal life?”* Or is He someone else?
- Is Jesus someone who touched hearts and cured bodies and souls of people who have faith in Him – or is He someone else?
- Is Jesus someone who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets – or is He someone else who turns a blind eye at the Law that His Father gave to Moses?
- Is Jesus someone who believes every word that is in the Scriptures – as the written Word of God- or is He someone else?
- Is Jesus someone who invites people to come to Him and be transformed – never to be the same again – healed of affliction, disease, addictions, perversions and sinful

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behavior? Or is He someone else – who says come to me and stay as you are – have fun and forget what my Father said – that was for another time that has expired long ago? I don't know about you, but that makes me very uncomfortable to even think about that!

Sadly, there are people who identify themselves as 'Christians' today who cannot – or will not confess that Jesus is who God says He is. They will either say – Oh, He was a great prophet, or teacher, or even that He had great power that was used to lead us to our own divinity. You have heard me speak about some of the biggest offenders to what we believe to be the truth.

- 19th century German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who believed that Jesus had more "God consciousness" than any other human ever had.
- The late Episcopal Priest and theologian Marcus Borg claimed that the story of Jesus is simply a metaphor, while others make the claim that Jesus is pure mythology.
- There are many others who have raised questions about the identity of Jesus – and sadly they lead others down a terribly wrong path.

My dear friends, let's face it, you either accept the Divinity of Jesus Christ as the only Son of God – who died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins – OR NOT! Believe in Him – and what the Bible says about Him - OR NOT!

As we head into the Season of Lent this Wednesday, I feel it is important for us to listen to the word from the beloved Apostle John, who warns us of this kind of deception with these words from 2 John 1:7-9, "*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*"

If you believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and that God's Holy Word is true – then we leave it to Jesus and let Him and God's Word transform us to His ways – and not transform Jesus and Scripture to ours. There is only ONE TRUTH - God has spoken – JESUS IS GOD'S SON – and we are to listen to Him!