

## Sermon on the Transfiguration

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O God, who on the holy mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses thy well-beloved Son wonderfully transfigured: mercifully grant unto us such a vision of his divine majesty, that we, being purified and strengthened by thy grace, may be transformed into his likeness from glory to glory; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

This morning's Gospel reading takes place almost in the middle of Mark's Gospel. Shortly before Jesus and his inner circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John go up a mountain while in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus strictly charges them not to tell anyone about this. Soon after Jesus begins to tell His disciples in Mk 8:31 "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again." (ESV) Now six days later somewhere in Galilee Jesus and his chosen three climb a mountain. Some scholars think the mountain is either Mt. Tabor or Mt. Hermon. Most think it was Mt. Hermon. The summit of Mt. Hermon straddles the border of Syria and Lebanon and rises to 9,232 ft. above sea level. That is a tall mountain for anyone to walk up!

In Mark's Gospel he portrays Jesus as very much a human. He feels pity for people, He shows anger, feels hungry, and is tired. While on the mountain He doesn't speak to the three disciples.

Sometime after the four of them reach the top Jesus was transfigured. His illumination came from within and not by something from outside. His brightness or radiance was brighter than a lighting flash. Now I have seen lighting strike trees and can tell you it creates a very bright flash. The illumination is a glimpse of Jesus' second coming when He will come in a cloud of glory.

While on the mountain and during the transfiguration Peter, James, and John are given a brief glimpse of the glory of our heavenly Father dwelling among man. While there, suddenly Elijah and Moses appear before them and are seen talking to Jesus. It may be Jesus is talking to them about His imminent death that was going happen. We don't know because none of the Gospels tell us what was said.

Moses had an encounter with God very similar to what Jesus experienced. I would like you to turn to page 124 in your pew Bibles to Exodus 24:15-16 and follow along with me. "Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud." (ESV) To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.

In chapter 34 of Exodus, we read that Moses had to go back up the mountain and obtain a second set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments because when he came down with the first set Aaron his brother had made a golden calf for the people to worship. When Moses saw what had happened, he threw down the tablets and broke them. Because he broke the tablets he had to go back up later and receive replacements. Now turn to page 141 to Ex 34:29 and follow along with me “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.” (ESV) After that Moses would wear a veil to cover his face. He would remove the veil when he entered the tabernacle to talk to God and then when he left, he would put the veil on again.

Now back to the mountain top with Jesus and the three disciples. Mark tells us in Mk 9:7 “A cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to him.’” (ESV) This is very reminiscent to what is written in Deut. 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb” (ESV) In Mark 1:11 “And a voice came from Heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (ESV) By saying this God is telling the disciples who Jesus is and He is now being endorsed by His Father. So far, the disciples have not listened very well. They still think of Jesus as a good teacher

and the future Messiah of the Old Testament that looked for an earthly king.

The three disciples saw the glory of Jesus, they saw His greatness over Moses and Elijah, and they heard the voice from the cloud giving authentication to Jesus as the Son of God and they still did not get it. In Mk 9:38, after coming down from the mountain, they still called Jesus teacher.

As I mentioned earlier Peter professed Jesus as the Messiah in Mk 8:27 when he said, “You are the Christ.” (ESV) In that instance however Peter was still thinking about a divinely anointed leader. The disciples were still looking for someone who would liberate the Jewish people from the stranglehold Rome had on them. After seeing Jesus talking to Elijah and Moses Peter says in MK 9:5 “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (ESV) It could be Peter thought Jesus was tired after climbing the mountain; however, if Peter had recognized who Jesus truly was, he would not have called him Rabbi, which means teacher. Readers of the Gospels today have the advantage of knowing who Jesus is before the Disciples knew. They did not have any Gospel accounts to read yet.

Our Gospel reading for today covered three awe inspiring events for the disciples while on the mountain. 1. Jesus was transfigured or changed by a remarkable radiance of Glory of His face and clothes. 2. Moses and Elijah, who had been dead for a long time appear.

And 3. God speaks from a cloud telling the disciples “this is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!” (ESV)

It took the death and resurrection of Jesus to convince all but one of Jesus’ disciples and the one holdout was Thomas and he was convinced when he was told to put his hand in the wound of Jesus’ side and to look at the holes in His hands. Sadly, in today’s world there are still people who don’t believe let alone even know who Jesus is. It is up to us as Christians to proclaim the Gospel in our daily lives by word and deed as St Frances reminded people when he walked the earth. We need to listen and do what Jesus tells us in the Bible in the Great Commission. As disciples we are to proclaim the Gospel to everyone.

The transfiguration validated to Jesus’ disciples that He is who He said He is: The Son of God. His glory was seen and His disciples were told to listen to Him. Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.

After the transfiguration Jesus, Peter, James, and John descend from the mountain and head for Jerusalem where He gives the ultimate sacrifice for us all.

This Wednesday is the start of the 40 days of Lent. We will have 40 days to prepare ourselves for the celebration of all celebrations, the resurrection of our Savior. We live in a broken world where darkness prevails. Think about what we can do to help heal it. Some ideas are doing daily readings of our Bibles, daily prayers for our nation and the world, food for the Douglas Food Bank, and fasting. There are many more things we can

do. If anyone wants other suggestions of good books to read for Lent or other help, I will be glad to help you.

And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed all honor and glory now and forever, AMEN.