

Worship Service for February 14th: Transfiguration

- **Old Testament:** 2 Kings 2:1-12
- **New Testament:** Mark 9:2-9
- **Psalms:** Psalm 50:1-6

Announcements:

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Bible study will resume on February 17th. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 1.

Sermon: The Transfiguration!

A lot has been happening since we last encountered Jesus in chapter one where he healed the sick and delivered those who were possessed by demons. Since then, he has gone on to perform many different miracles, signs and wonders and foretelling his impending death.

Today we experience Jesus in another dimension. We see him transfigured, transformed before the very eyes of his disciples and it leaves Peter in awe. Jesus was transfigured before his disciples and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. Not only that, Elijah and Moses also appear and are talking with Jesus.

The gospel of Luke gives us a glimpse of their conversation; we are informed that Jesus, Elijah and Moses were discussing about his impending death which was going to take place in Jerusalem. The transfiguration story leads us into Christ's Passion - crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension. The apostles were led to associate the heavenly glory with the earthly humiliation of the cross, the conquering with the suffering Messiah. From this point forward, the glory of the cross quenches its shame and helps the disciples to understand that Christ's suffering would lead to him entering into glory. And above all the transfiguration leads to a deepened conviction of the Saviour's divine Sonship.

The event of the transfiguration has long been considered as one of the most important events in the life of Jesus. It plays a central theological role because it connects him more explicitly to Moses and Elijah, who are the two chief representatives of the Old Testament. They represented the Law and the Prophets,

they were both considered as forerunners of the Messiah and Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law and the prophecies of the Old testament. Even at the Mount of Transfiguration, the cross was still the central focus.

Transfigured translates a form of the verb metamorphoō, from which the English word “metamorphosis” derives. It appears four times in the New Testament, always in reference to a radical transformation. In Matthew 17:2 it describes the transfiguration, while in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, it refers to the transformation in the lives of believers brought about by salvation.

Christ’s nature could not change, only His appearance. The brilliant glory of His divine nature blazed forth through the veil of His humanity, and His face. There is no possible explanation that denies the supernatural element of this experience. The glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ burst forth and an external heavenly illumination affected his garment and enveloped Moses and Elijah.

It would therefore seem that when our passage talks about *transfigured* what it means is that Christ’s person was drastically changed from its natural apparent appearance to shine with great brightness which was probably the result and manifestation of the glory of his divine nature.

When Jesus had mentioned his forthcoming death to his disciples, Peter had argued. Who wouldn’t? After following Jesus for years and seeing him heal the sick, take authority over demons and even raise the dead. How could he now say that he would suffer and be persecuted by the religious leaders and be eventually crucified? Crucifixion was death meant for criminals. Jesus rebuked Peter and had to take him alongside James and John to the mountain to pray. On the mountain, the disciples behold this glorious and indescribable manifestation of light and glory which was a reflection of what Jesus would eventually experience after his death and resurrection when he will reign as the King of kings and the Lord of Lords.

As Christians today, how do we fit into the transfiguration story? For the disciples, the main purpose of their witnessing the transfiguration was to reinforce their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. And Peter affirms that when he declares in 2 Peter 1:16-18 *“¹⁶ For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me*

great joy.”¹⁸ We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.”

Jesus was sensitive enough to realize that the disciples’ faith needed to be fortified. In the same way, we too as Christians need our faith to be fortified every now and again because there are times when we go through stuff that weakens our faith and sometimes even brings it to point zero.

Like Peter, others struggle to grasp the idea of Jesus’ suffering therefore bringing doubt into their minds. We are gradually getting into the season of Lent and God is using this passage to prepare us for the season of doom and gloom, the season of darkness, suffering, shame and pain. He is reminding us that there is glory at the end of every suffering. The Bible says weeping may come in the night, but joy comes in the morning. After a gruesome lent period, we enter into the time of celebration and glorification. We enter into a period of victory of our Saviour who conquers sin and death on the cross for us. And once again we can have hope – hope that we will overcome not only sin but also death; hope that we too will be transformed not only on the last day but beginning from now as we are transformed from glory to glory into the image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the midst of any form of doubt which might be ongoing in our minds today, maybe because of some challenges that we are facing which seems to make us look like people without a God or people with a helpless, voice. Our passage is reassuring us today, through the voice of God confirming Jesus as his Son and encouraging us to listen to him. We are called upon to keep serving God, keep obeying His commandments and keep representing Jesus on earth as his disciples because at the end we will also experience his glory.

The apostle John, who was one of the disciples of Jesus who witnessed the transfiguration reassures us in 1 John 3:2 saying, ***“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”***

Jesus was entirely caught up with and bathed in the love, power and kingdom of God, so that it transforms his whole being with light. This is a sign to show that Jesus is not just indulging in fantasies about God’s kingdom, but that he is speaking and doing the truth. It’s the sign that he is indeed the true prophet, priest and king.

The true Messiah. We are therefore called upon as children of God to listen to Jesus through the Scriptures, through fellowship with him and through prayers. We are assured that we can listen to him because he is the beloved Son of the Most High God. And as we learn to listen, even if sometimes we get scared and say all the wrong things like Peter did, we may find that God's glory creeps up on us unawares, embraces us, strengthening us as it did the disciples, for the road ahead.

Whatever challenges we feel are unending in our lives, be it the pandemic or any other thing this word is for us. God is calling us to listen to Jesus because he is His son and he too has known suffering and pain and understands us. Jesus is telling us today that our sufferings will always transform into God's glory. Listen and believe today and hold on to Jesus in his mighty name. Amen.

Prayer

God of life, God of love: You created us and set us in relationship with each other—in families and neighbourhoods, communities and countries, cultures and nations. We give you thanks for all the supportive relationships which bring meaning and encouragement to our lives and have meant so much in times of isolation. Help us contribute what we can to sustain the wellbeing of our community for all who call it home.

It is a strange time of year, O God. We linger between the seasons of Epiphany and Lent. We are between the joy of your appearing and the horror of your undoing at the hands of those who would not or could not embrace your way of life. Perhaps we – like Peter, James, and John – wait for your appearing in dazzling light and unmistakable clarity: We are in need of a glimpse of Jesus who is the way through the mix and mess of this life.

Our planet is fragile and so is the life that claims it as home. We wonder how long we can simply take what we want with little regard for what it costs your creation. We wonder if the planet is crying out for relief in the floods that are really tears; the earthquakes that try and shake our consciousness; the gales that blow sighs, too deep for words.

We pray for the people of the world whose names we will never know, whose faces flash across the TV screen in anonymity born of numbers; those who bear the weight of earth's pain. We are in need of a glimpse of Jesus who is the truth – the

truth that love is stronger than hate; peace is possible; and life can emerge even in the midst of devastation. We pray for that truth to be known.

We are in need of a glimpse of Jesus who is the life; inviting us to follow in his footsteps as he trod the way of love and justice, inviting us to follow him in prayer as he lived out his faith and made You known.

We give thanks for the good news that unfolds in the world as people dream your dreams, follow your nudging, and seek you in the faces they meet each day. Perhaps, O God, it is the only Transfiguration we really need.

For all those who are quiet witnesses to your love and way of life we give thanks, O God. Draw us to the rhythm of Lent as it unfolds in our midst; a sacred invitation to explore the corners of our soul. Open us to your light that we might see ourselves clearly, with all our fears and faults and faith, with all our desires and dreams and duties. Help us to see our journey as a place of your appearing – that like Peter, James, and John we may come down from the mountain and set one foot in front of the other.

Today we give thanks for our church family and for the years of worship and witness offered here. So much has changed for us over these past few months and we pray you will bless our leaders who have to think carefully, and creatively so congregational life continues. We remember those of our number in need of your special attention today... *(Hold a silence)*. Guide us all with your wisdom and insight so we find ways to reach out to each other in support and friendship as we pray in the words Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One. He who calls you is faithful and trustworthy and will thoroughly complete his work in you. Go in the peace of Christ. Amen.