

February 11, 2018

Transfiguration

St. Mark 9:2-9

Jesus' Glory Beams Out in Blinding Radiance

Rev. George Ferch

Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

Do the new LED headlight beams on cars and trucks bother you? Maybe it is just me, but their blinding radiance through the windshield, or in the rearview mirror makes me want to cover or close my eyes. A different blinding radiance, our Savior's Transfiguration, beamed out on the mountain. It did not cause the apostles to close, or cover their eyes.

In a sense, that blinding radiance, Jesus' dazzling white clothes, opened their eyes. Jesus' glory opened their eyes to see that Jesus is the Son of God to whom they should listen. God meant the sight of Jesus' glory to open the disciples' eyes to the final outcomes of his approaching suffering and death. What we call Jesus' Passion. That outcome includes the truth of Jesus' words to the Sadducees that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. That's why Moses and Elijah were there.

Jesus' Transfiguration is the start of the final countdown to the cross only months away. In the church year, Jesus' Transfiguration starts the countdown to the beginning of Lent only days away. Look on the Transfiguration of our Lord with wondering eyes and trusting hearts as **Jesus' Glory Beams Out in Blinding Radiance.** It is glory most often hidden under the veil of human flesh. It is glory we will see without hindrance at Jesus' return.

Even after he began his public ministry at his baptism, Jesus most often appeared to be an ordinary man; except when he didn't. He turned water into wine. He healed the sick and drove out demons. He raised the dead and calmed the storm. Jesus' glory as God was most often hidden under the veil of human flesh; except when it wasn't.

The Son of God and Son of Man led his inner circle of apostles'-Peter, James, and John, "up a high mountain where they were alone by themselves. There he was transfigured in front of them. His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone could bleach them." Jesus' glory beams out in blinding radiance and Peter, speaking for them, "did not know what to say because they were terrified." And to top it off, "Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus."

Who could blame them? Try to put yourselves in their place. Pure sin standing in the presence of divine holiness has no chance. All Peter could think of, and it was not bad, was "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here." Peter thought it would be nice to erect some tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Peter might well have been thinking, "What is going on here," hoping for the best but expecting the worst.

What was going on here? Jesus' glory beams out in blinding radiance to reveal that he is the true God. The Son did not leave his glory behind in heaven but most often hid it under the veil of human flesh. But not now, at this moment.

What was going on was the presence of two living saints who represented the Law and the prophets, the Old Testament. We see Moses in his resurrected body and Elijah who went directly to heaven without seeing death. They were alive because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is Jesus, is the God not of the dead but of the living. The final outcome of Jesus' death would be Jesus' new life in his resurrection from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruits, the cause, of all resurrections and new life including ours.

Jesus' glory most often hidden under the veil of his flesh in his humiliation was hidden no longer at his resurrection. While his full glory still did not beam out, in his glorified body Jesus no longer subjected himself to the limits of his humanity. When Jesus returns, we will be able to see his full glory as God and Man since we will have the same glory in our resurrected bodies. We will be like him so we shall see him as he is.

The apostles' got a peek into that complete glory. Jesus gave them a strong view of the gospel triumph prior to the glory in his suffering and death as the world's Sacrifice. Not only that, the Father once again introduced his Son to them with an audible voice from heaven. And, because Jesus is the Son of God, they were to listen to him.

It is not unusual for a father to introduce his children to others because we are proud of them and their accomplishments. God the Father gloried in his Son who was about to accomplish the work of redemption he had come into the world to carry out. These words echo the Father's words at Jesus' baptism. At the beginning of Epiphany and at the end of Epiphany, the same Father acknowledges the same Son who said of himself, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

As quickly as Jesus' glory beamed out in blinding radiance it was hidden again under the veil of his flesh. In that flesh, Jesus set out for Jerusalem to hand himself over to his enemies. The Sanhedrin could not see Jesus' glory. Pilate could not see it. The disciples did not see it. The mockers at the foot of the cross did not see it. One of the criminals saw it. We see Jesus' glory in his suffering and death through the eyes of faith beholding the cross.

All people will see Jesus' full glory when he returns. For those who do not believe in Jesus this glory will mean their everlasting rejection. For believers, children he has adopted into his family like Toddriana, Jesus' glory means a timeless life of perfect peace and joy, and glory.

We were not there, of course. We do have Peter's inspired affidavit to what took place. Peter recorded in his second epistle, "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am pleased.' We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain."

As we prepare to observe the Lenten Season, Transfiguration gives us a look at the radiant glory of Easter Sunday and the glorious day we enter eternity either through death or Christ's return. Don't let the bright beam close your eyes. Open them and look with wonderment on your Savior. Say with Peter, "It is good for us to be here." Amen. <SDG>