

Transfiguration
Mark 9:2-9
Hymns: 357, 37, 47, 152, 287, 528.

Introit : Psalm 50,1-6.

P The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken.

C **He has summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.**

P Out of Zion, which is perfect in beauty,

C **God has shone forth.**

P Our God will come and will not remain silent.

C **A fire will devour before Him. It will be very stormy around Him.**

P He will summon the heavens above and the earth,

C **that He may judge His people:**

P “Gather around Me, My devout people,

C **who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice!”**

All: **The heavens have been proclaiming His righteousness. For God Himself is Judge.**

COLLECT: O God in the Glorious Transfiguration of Your beloved Son. You confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of Moses and Elijah. In the Voice that came from the bright cloud You wonderfully foreshowed our adoption by Grace. Mercifully make us co-heirs with the King in His Glory and bring us to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven: through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C** **AMEN.**

Old Testament: 2 Kings 2:1-12
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, 4:1-6
Gospel: Mark 9:2-9

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

The text for the Sermon today Transfiguration Sunday is written in the book of Mark 9:2-9, which was our Gospel reading before.

2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him, and led them up onto a high mountain, by themselves and alone. He was transfigured before them, 3 and His clothes became dazzling and very white, whiter than any launderer on earth could bleach them. 4 Then Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they began to talk with Jesus.

5 Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!”

6 For he did not know what to say, because they had become very afraid. 7 Then a cloud came and overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud: “This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!”

8 Suddenly, as they looked around, they did not see anyone with them any more except Jesus only.

9 While they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. **AMEN**

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

Today is the Sunday of the Transfiguration. We just heard an account of that very Transformation from the Gospel according to Mark. Transfiguration Sunday is a major turning point on the church calendar. We enter the Sunday of the Transfiguration from the season of Epiphany and, as we leave, we look forward to Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.

That’s how it is, the Sunday of the Transfiguration is a blending of these two seasons. The obvious epiphany which is celebrating the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles is Jesus standing

before Peter, James, and John and giving them a glimpse of His glory. The foreshadowing of Lent is the prophecy of Jesus' upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection that precedes the Transfiguration by just a few verses.

The reading that we just heard from the Gospel according to Mark begins with the phrase "After six days ..." Six days after what? The preceding verses tell us that Jesus **"began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to be killed, and, after three days, to rise again. ³² He was speaking frankly about this,"** [Mark 8:31–32] So the transfiguration happened six days after Jesus began telling the disciples about His sacrifice to save the world from sin.

We know that the disciples didn't understand what Jesus meant because Mark's account goes on to say, **"and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him."** [Mark 8:31–32] None of the disciples understood, but Peter was always the one with the mouth and he actually scolded Jesus for talking about suffering and death.

Many of you will remember Jesus' response to Peter. **"Jesus turned around, looked at His disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."** [Mark 8:33] With these words, Jesus warns Peter that not only is he wrong, but he is also acting as an agent of Satan in order to tempt Jesus to abandon His mission of going to the cross.

So Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain. Mark tells us that Jesus was transfigured so that even **His clothes became dazzling and very white, whiter than any launderer on earth could bleach them.** Not only that, but two Old Testament saints, Moses and Elijah, appeared and had a conversation with Jesus, and the disciples recognised who they were! There were no photographs in those days, and Moses and Elijah had been dead for centuries! You have got to admit that this is pretty impressive stuff.

The Gospel doesn't actually tell us anything else about Jesus and His conversation with Moses the Law Giver and Elijah the prophet. Instead, it draws our attention to the utter failure of Peter to understand what is happening. Peter said to Jesus, **"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!"** Once again, here is Peter trying to divert Jesus from the cross. In effect he is saying, "Hey Jesus! We can build some shelters up here and just stay here with Your friends and we can worship You." Now keep in mind that if Jesus stays up on the mountain, then He can't go to the cross. This is simply another variation on the devil's main temptation of Jesus.

About this time, God the Father puts in an appearance similar to His appearance at Jesus' baptism. A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, a voice came out of the cloud: **"This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!"** It's almost as if God the Father was saying, "Hey! Pay attention! This is My Son. When He tells you that He is going to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise from the dead, listen to Him!" When the Father appears, the disciples must have been terrified and probably fell face down on the ground.

Not much has changed over the centuries. We would find ourselves face down to the ground in terror right along with the disciples. You see, we think that we would really like to be there with the shiny, mountain top, Jesus. We think it would be really great to have God's glory shine down on us. We think it would be great to bask in the brightness of God's presence. But, what we think would happen and what the Bible actually says about being in the glory of God are two different things.

God's revealed presence has a profound effect on people. The Bible tells of people falling to the ground like dead men, falling to their faces, quaking in fear, and so on. Basically, it doesn't make any difference what kind of person you are. If God were to show up in all His power and glory, we would have a panic attack. Today's Gospel account says, the disciples **"did not know what to say, because they had become very afraid."**

You see, when God shows up in the full majesty of the glory that He revealed on the mountain top, we become intensely aware of how holy and powerful He is and how sinful and weak we are. This is the terror of sinful people in the revealed presence of Holy God. There's a reason angels normally begin their message

with the words, **“Fear Not!”** Even though the angels only reflect the glory of God’s holiness, it's enough to terrify even the bravest soul. We think we would like to bask in the glory of God, but the terror of Peter, James, and John teaches us to rethink our desire for this kind of mountaintop experience with God.

Instead, we should think about joining God on a different mountain ... the mountain Jesus was talking about when He said **“began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to be killed, and, after three days, to rise again. ³² He was speaking frankly about this, and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.”** [Mark 8:31–32] As marvellous as it is that we should hear about Jesus showing His glory to Peter, James, and John, this is not the glory that we should seek. Instead, we should seek the glory of the blood, sweat, and tears of the cross.

It's in the ugly brutality of Jesus on the cross that God reveals His greatest glory. The glory of Christ on the cross is the glory that takes away our fear and replaces it with humble confidence, a confidence, not in ourselves, but a confidence in the God-man on the cross. It's the brutal glory of Christ on the cross that takes away all sin and replaces it with the righteousness of Jesus. This is the glory that Peter didn't understand when Jesus spoke of His suffering, death, and resurrection. This is the glory that Peter didn't understand when he suggested building three shelters on the mountain top.

Eventually, Peter would understand. Before he understood, he had to witness Jesus in Gethsemane as He prayed. He had to witness as a band of soldiers arrested Jesus. He had to witness as he tried to stop Jesus’ mission with his sword only to see Jesus heal the ear of the servant. He had to witness as the soldiers took Jesus away to suffer and die. Most of all, he had to witness the living Lord risen from the dead, showing His hands, feet, and side to the disciples. Even then, it was only when the Holy Spirit came on the following Pentecost that Peter would get it right.

We are thankful that Peter got it right because he is the one who taught Mark, and Mark is the one who wrote today’s reading from the Gospel. Peter finally did get it right. It's through the apostolic words of Peter as recorded by Mark that we have the Gospel account we heard today.

All too often, we seek the bright glory of the mountain top experience that shone on Peter, James, and John as we heard it in today’s Gospel reading. We tend to ignore that part where the disciples were in terror. We ignore the terror because of our [self-importance](#) we believe that the holy glory of God will not strike us down with terror over our sins.

God the Father’s message is clear. **“This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!”** Listen to Jesus teach that **“the Son of Man to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to be killed, and, after three days, to rise again.”** [Mark 8:31.] It's this suffering, death, and resurrection that's the glory of God that rescues us from sin, death, and the devil, that gives us eternal life.

The season of Epiphany is about the revelation of Jesus Christ. It begins with the light of the star that led the magi to the Christ child. It ends with the Transfiguration that teaches us that this man Jesus is also true God. In revealing Jesus as both man and God that Epiphany prepares us for the glory of the cross. It teaches us that the man who died on the cross is also the God who shone forth in the transfiguration. That in Jesus Christ, we have both man and God dying for our sins as He hangs on the cross.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, - the beginning of Lent. Now that we have once again celebrated the Epiphany of Jesus Christ as both God and man, we are ready to remember that Jesus must be both God and man so that He can go to the cross and save us from sin. We are now ready to remember the journey that Jesus took from the mountain of the Transfiguration to the mountain of the cross. We are ready for Lent. We are ready to meditate on the journey that leads to the cross where Jesus will battle for us and win the victory - the victory that gives us true life with Him forever. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

3rd Hymn: 47,

Prayer of the Church
The Transfiguration of Our Lord 2018

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

P Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Your Son Your glory tabernacled in human flesh and blood to bring to us eternal life. Open the eyes of all people to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Creator of the human race, Moses and Elijah appeared with the Saviour in glory to witness that all the law and the prophets speak of Him. Give all pastors and servants of the Church such clarity in their teaching, that all who listen to them may hear the voice of the Saviour calling them to life. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P King of the nations, You intend all authority upon the earth to be a blessing, not a burden. Remember those entrusted with civil authority here and in all places, and enable them to serve with wisdom and integrity. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Comforter of the sorrowing, You alone can bring peace that passes understanding to aching hearts.

Remember all who are ill, hospitalized, lonely, afflicted or dying [*especially Your servants*

and those we name in our hearts].

Let them sense Your presence, taste Your peace and experience healing and relief according to Your gracious will. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Giver of the feast, You spread Your banquet before Your children, that they might taste and see that You are good. Grant to all who come to the holy altar today repentant and believing hearts, that this Sacrament may transform them from one degree of glory to another. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Immortal One, You raised Your Son from the dead by Your life-giving Spirit, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters who share in His endless life and glory. Receive our thanks for Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John and all who have fallen asleep in our Saviour's faith and friendship. Bring us to behold with them the fullness of His glory in the age to come. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant to us, all-glorious Trinity, for You are a good God and You love Your whole creation. To You we give all glory, honour and worship: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever! **Amen.**

4th Hymn: 152,

Just a reminder that Ash Wednesday is the 25th Anniversary of the AELC.