

Transfiguration of Our Lord 2019

Luke 9:28-36.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, Luke 9:28-36.

28 About eight days after He said this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up the mountain to pray. 29 While He was praying, the appearance of His face changed and His clothing became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly two men were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah. 31 They appeared in glory and were talking about His departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem.

32 Peter and the men with him had been overcome by sleep. When they woke up, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. 33 When these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" He did not realise what he was saying. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them. They were frightened as they went into the cloud. 35 Then a voice came out of the cloud: "This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!"

36 When the voice had spoken, there was Jesus all alone. The disciples kept quiet about this, and in those days they did not tell anything of what they had seen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

This morning we have come to the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord. This day in the church year acts as a gateway. It's not only a fairly spectacular epiphany, but it also points us to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It really fits in well with both the season of Epiphany which comes to an end this week and the season of Lent which begins this coming Wednesday.

At the start of Jesus' ministry Jesus said, **"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."** And He was preaching in the synagogues of Judea." [Luke 4:43-44.] These words are a reasonable description of the first part of Jesus' ministry as it is recorded in the four Gospel accounts. At first, Jesus revealed Himself to the people. That is what epiphany is all about, the Lord revealing Himself to the people. This was a time of teaching and a time of signs. As Jesus taught and performed these signs, more and more people came to see Him as the promised Messiah or Christ. As we see in the account of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus drew thousands to His message.

The Hebrew word Messiah and the Greek word Christ both mean **"The Anointed One."** The culture of the day expressed many different ideas about what it meant that Jesus was The Anointed One. Most of them were wrong. As more and more people began to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, - He began to teach more and more about what that really means. He began to say things like, **"The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised on the third day."** [Luke 9:22.] Jesus taught that the purpose of the Messiah was to suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

This prediction of His suffering, death, and resurrection, confused and frightened the disciples. They simply couldn't entertain or understand the idea that the Anointed One would conquer sin, death, and the power of the devil by suffering and dying. Their total inability to comprehend this led to bewilderment, frustration, and fear.

Not only did Jesus speak of His own cross, but **He went on to tell them all, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross every day, and follow Me!"** [Luke 9:23, ESV] Jesus not only taught that He had a cross in His future, but that the life of His followers would be one of daily cross bearing as well. That is, the same faith that gives you an eternal connection with Jesus, will also add daily trials to your life. This is also a confusing teaching. Our natural instinct is that doing things right should improve our daily lives, - right!.

So it is that as we start today's reading from the account of Luke, we learn that Jesus led a very confused and bewildered Peter, John, and James up on the mountain to pray. Now, **about eight days after He said this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up the mountain to pray. 29 While He was praying, the appearance of His face changed and His clothing became dazzling white.** [Luke 9:28–29.] Here is the experience that gives the phrase “mountain top experience” its meaning. This was a small peek into the glory that Jesus always has, but that He kept hidden in His state of humiliation. Once again, here is a sign that shows Jesus as true God, the Son of God the Father.

But, Jesus wasn't the only one who was shining in glory on the mountaintop. **Suddenly two men were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah. 31 They appeared in glory and were talking about His departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem.** This conversation was pretty amazing because Moses and Elijah had been dead for centuries. In fact, we have an account of Moses' death and burial in today's Old Testament lesson. Their appearance indicates that Moses and Elijah enjoy close fellowship with God in heaven. And that's not the only amazing thing that happened, Peter, James and John recognised who they are, the fact was they had died centuries before they were born! Peter, James, and John not only get an epiphany of Jesus in His glory, but they also get a glimpse of two very important people from Israel's history.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah also give an opportunity to learn about the main topic of conversation in heaven. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spoke of **His departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem.** This was Luke's gentle way of telling us that they were talking about Jesus upcoming death in Jerusalem. The disciples were bewildered by Jesus' upcoming death, but Moses and Elijah spoke of it openly. It was the topic of their conversation with Jesus. It was the topic of conversation in heaven. Peter, John, and James heard Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah about His upcoming death in Jerusalem ... a conversation about what it means to be the anointed one of God ... the Christ ... the Messiah.

Peter, John, and James had done what they usually do when they were alone with Jesus while He prayed. They went to sleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus lighting up the mountain top and talking with Moses and Elijah. Peter did what he usually did when he was in a confusing situation ... he began talking before he began thinking. Peter said to Jesus, **“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!”** Luke then added that Peter **did not realise what he was saying.**

God the Father interrupted Peter, all of a sudden; **“A cloud came and overshadowed them. They were frightened as they went into the cloud. Then a voice came out of the cloud: “This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!”** It's almost as if God the Father is saying, **“Peter, I gave you two ears and one mouth. You should listen twice as much as you talk. You should especially listen to My Son. When He says, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised,’ pay attention!”**

Peter, the rest of the disciples, and all the people who listened to Jesus teach had a similar problem. They were not looking for a Saviour who would die for them. The Saviour who lit up the mountaintop fit right into their plans. A Saviour on His way to die in Jerusalem did not.

It's part of our fallen human nature to want a saviour who is spectacular. We like this show of glory that lights up the mountaintop. We like fireworks. We like light shows. We like fancy, showy displays that grab our attention. They are fun. They are entertaining. They make us feel good. We want a saviour that would beat up the baddies. This is the saviour that we **think** we want.

Here's the problem. We would be in big trouble, if the spectacular display that lit up the mountaintop was the only god we knew. If the spectacular display that lit up the mountaintop was the only god we knew, then our relationship with God would be a relationship of punishment. God is holy and just. He must punish sin. We are wretched sinners. Therefore, God must punish us. That is, He must punish us if the spectacular display that lit up the mountaintop was the only god we knew.

The transfiguration is a mountaintop epiphany that reveals Jesus as the Holy Son of God from heaven. He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God and that means He is the Christ who will go to another mountain near Jerusalem and die to take away all our sins. God must punish sin, but will not punish us. Instead this very

Christ will take our sin onto Himself and the punishment for sin will rain down on Him. In this way, He will stand in our place and satisfy the justice of holy God. This is the Saviour that we see on the mountaintop as He talks with Moses and Elijah. God the Father identifies this Saviour and tells us to listen to Him.

Jesus taught that He would suffer and die. He also taught that He would rise on the third day. He kept these promises. He battled sin, death, and the devil as He suffered on the cross. He followed death into death and with His death He conquered death. Jesus is our true Saviour.

We know that Jesus conquered death because death could not hold Him. Jesus returned to life. He promised us that even though we die, He will raise us as well. When that day comes, those who rejected Him will have to deal with the full glory of the justice of God and they will try to flee from Him. The Jesus who lit up the mountaintop will terrify them. Those who trust the Saviour who went to the other mountain and died for them will rejoice in the presence of God's love. They will live forever with their Saviour who loves them.

The Transfiguration prepares us for Lent. As it fulfils its role as a true epiphany of Jesus, it also identifies Jesus as the one who must journey to the cross and sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world. It also identifies Him as the Saviour who will conquer sin, death, and the power of the devil and rise from the dead. The Transfiguration informs us of the journey to the cross ... the great theme of Lent. In the Transfiguration we learn that Jesus is indeed the sovereign of heaven on earth. He is the answer to the prayer, "**Thy Kingdom come.**" We also learn that He is the one who journeyed to Jerusalem so that He could suffer, die, and rise so that we could enjoy the presence of the reign of heaven forever. **Amen**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

P Because the Lord who was transfigured also died, rose, ascended and reigns for us, let us in the Holy Spirit pray to our heavenly Father with confidence.

Brief Silence

P Glorious Father, at Your Son's transfiguration, You called us to listen to Him. Open our reluctant ears to hear His Word, and give us faith to believe it. Guide and empower the Pastors of the AELC and the ULMA to preach Your Gospel, give them humility, boldness and love for Your Word and Your people. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Holy Father, You promised a land of plenty to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Baptism You promise to give us Your glorious Son and all the benefits of His crucifixion and resurrection. Renew all of us in faith so that we live as the holy people Your Son has made us to be. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Father, at age one hundred twenty, Moses' eyes were not dim and his vigour had not diminished. We give you thanks for our senior brothers and sisters in Christ through whom You provide a wonderful example of faith and Christian life. - Show them new ways they can serve Your kingdom, especially when their bodies no longer allow them to serve in the ways they did in the past and grant to them faith and fulfillment. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Compassionate Father, we live in a world where so many are lonely, and we confess that we, too, neglect them and their needs. Forgive us and grant us hearts that care. Comfort the lonely and assure them that You are with them even when we fail them. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Holy Father, Peter, James and John saw Your Son's glory on the mountain. Teach us to see His glory in Your Word and Supper, so that in the midst of this troubled world we look forward to the glory that He will share with us on the Last Day. By Your Holy Spirit, create in us repentant faith to receive in Holy Communion His crucified, risen and glorified body. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Sovereign Father, You establish government so that we can live with order in this difficult world. Guide our nation and those who make, administer and judge our laws; for those in the armed forces who protect and defend us against our enemies; for laws that are good and just and for judges who are wise and

faithful, for those who care for the sick and injured, especially doctors, nurses, technicians, and all medical workers, the police the SES and fire brigades, help them to carry out their calling with joy and dedication as they seek to preserve life and care for all, protect them from evil and guide them in paths that are pleasing to You Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Compassionate Father, the Israelites grieved for Moses and we grieve for those who have died, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope. We give You thanks for Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John and all who lived and died trusting Jesus. Comfort all who mourn with the promises of Your presence now and a future reunion of all baptized believers in heaven. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Gracious Father, fix our thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest whom we confess. Even at His Transfiguration, His eyes were focused on His departure at Jerusalem, so set our hearts on His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension for us, so that we joyfully welcome Him when He returns with the full glory that was glimpsed at His Transfiguration. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Lord and giver of life Be with the Farmers that grow the food that we eat, and with those who are recovering from the floods and storms of the resent weeks. Lord in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands, dear Father, we place ourselves and all those for whom we pray, trusting that You are merciful because of Your Son who was transfigured, died and rose to life for us, who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.