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The Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 14, 2010
Text: Luke 9:28–36

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today is the Sunday of the Transfiguration of Our Lord. And what a day of rejoicing it is for us. Today marks the high point of the Epiphany season which we have been celebrating since January 6th. Epiphany is a season of light and revelation. And so the Church for many centuries has begun her epiphany celebration by remembering the light of the star that led the Magi to the child Jesus. It only seems fitting that the season of light and revelation come to a conclusion with the divine light and glory seen in our Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Our Gospel reading for today, taken from Luke 9:28–36, has Jesus going up to an unnamed mountain in Israel. Verse 28 tells us that Jesus takes with Him Peter, John, and James, our Lord's inner circle of sorts. Luke also informs us that the Lord's transfiguration took place "about eight days after these sayings" (vs. 28). These sayings are quite important. They set the context for the Transfiguration and make it even more glorious for Jesus and for all His people, including us.

In the verses just before today's reading, we find 3 sayings. The first is Peter's great confession about who Jesus is. We still say and believe it to this very day, You are "The Christ of God" (vs. 20). The second saying is Jesus' response to Peter's confession and it forms the very heart and core of the Biblical gospel, "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" (vs. 22). The third saying is a bit longer but also important for it describes true, Christian discipleship,

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God" (vs. 23–27).

The three sayings are: 1) a proper confession of faith, 2) the gospel of what Jesus does to save His people, and 3) discipleship that flows out of confessing faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus.

Luke doesn't tell us what Jesus and His disciples discussed for those 8 days after these sayings. It's a pretty safe bet that the disciples are shell-shocked. Death and resurrection for the Christ, crosses and dying for His followers, things have really gotten intense. The disciples have been with Jesus 3 years by this time and Jesus has never been so direct in telling them what was about to happen.

And then Jesus takes Peter, John, and James to a mountain to pray. Wow! What a prayer meeting. Jesus' face is changed. How? The Bible doesn't really say but it was glorious whatever the case. And Jesus' clothing became "dazzling white" (vs. 29). And as if that weren't enough glory and majesty, Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus in heavenly splendor (vs. 30). Like I said, it's a prayer meeting for the ages. It must have been great!!

And what are Peter, John, and James doing during all this heavenly glory? Sleeping (vs. 32). They're sleeping during a true invasion of heaven on earth. But they wake up soon enough to know that something remarkable is happening. For Peter says to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here (that's the verse our sermon hymn is based upon). Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (vs. 33). Now Peter doesn't understand why it's good for them to be there but he's right. And it has everything to do with those three sayings from about 8 days before the Transfiguration.

The first saying was from Peter, "You are the Christ" (vs. 20). We call Jesus the Christ all the time. But what does it mean for Jesus to be the Christ? The Transfiguration tells us. Jesus the Christ is not only a Jewish man – as ordinary looking as any other Jewish man – but He's also God's Chosen Son. The three disciples saw the Son in His glory and God the Father declared from the cloud, "This is my Son, my Chosen One" (vs. 35).

Jesus' appearance being changed and His clothing becoming dazzling white are descriptions of His divine glory. This Man is also God. The Christ we worship is truly God and man in every sense of the word. Paul writes in Colossians 2:9 that in Jesus "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." But you wouldn't have known that without the Transfiguration. It was a momentary glimpse of Jesus' glory, the same glory we'll see when He comes again on the Last Day.

The second saying was from Jesus. Almost as soon as Peter had finished the last syllable of his great confession, that was saying #1, Jesus tells the disciples that He must be rejected, suffer, die, and be raised again. This is the heart and core of the Biblical gospel that we believe as Christians. In the Scriptures, Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are "of first important" to borrow Paul's words from I Corinthians 15.

They are so important in fact that that's reason why Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Did you catch it? Luke 9:31 says these saints of old "appeared in glory and spoke of His (Jesus') departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." The glorified Jesus and the radiant Moses and Elijah aren't

discussing esoteric, ivory tower theology that only angels are concerned about. Not so! They are talking about the salvation of the world, about your salvation.

Heaven and all the saints of heaven are concerned about what Jesus the Christ, God's only Son, does to save this human race. For in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father's right hand, heaven and earth are reconciled, brought together in peace. At Jesus' birth, the angels sang about the peace coming to the earth (2:14). At Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the crowds declare Jesus to be the King who brings peace to heaven and glory in the highest (19:38). Heaven and earth are joined together in Jesus.

You, dear baptized saints of the Lord, are the happy recipients of this peace, joy, and glory. Every time you think about what Jesus did for you, let the truths revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration fill in the details. Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension are no divine plan B but the very focus of heaven and earth. Does this not make the preaching of Christ crucified more glorious, our baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection more astounding, and the reception of Jesus' crucified yet resurrected flesh and blood in Holy Communion more joyous?! And by God's grace, these topics of heavenly conversation will remain central in our congregation until Christ comes again in glory.

The third saying is also from Jesus and deals with the nature of true discipleship. Jesus said that to be a Christian, one must take up his cross and follow Him daily and confess before the world that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. In other words, we are called to follow in the same path that our Lord Jesus followed. He bore His cross that destroyed the work and power of sin, death, and the devil. We bear our daily crosses that put to death in us our sinful nature with all its evil desires. Jesus confessed before the world that His heavenly Father sent Him for a divine task. We confess before the world that Jesus is our Lord and Christ who sends us out into the world to shine His light and glory.

But the Mount of Transfiguration also gives us a glimpse as to what the final victory for His disciples looks like. It's radiant glory and perfect fellowship with all the hosts of heaven. Yes, you will see Moses and Elijah and all the heavenly hosts face to face in glorious splendor. You will know them and they will know you.

But more glorious than that, you will see Jesus in all His glory even as Peter, James and John did but with one difference. There will be no fear of God the Father's presence as there was in vs. 34. And there will be no sin, no death. It will be pure perfection as we were meant to have from the very beginning of creation. What you see on the Mount of Transfiguration is a glimpse of the goal and completion of your Christ-confessing, cross-bearing discipleship.

The Sunday of the Transfiguration is all about seeing Christ in His glory, confessing Him to be the true Son of God who suffered, died, resurrected, and ascended into heaven for

your salvation, and living everyday as His disciple filled with the hope of heavenly glory. May the light and glory of our Lord's Transfiguration be with you always....

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.