

“Transfiguration Sunday”

February 11, 2018

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Transfiguration Sunday is the last Sunday in the Church season of Epiphany. As the days have gotten longer during the season of Epiphany, this season of the church year is meant to enlighten your heart and mind that the Christ has come into the world, so that you might be ready to follow Him as the disciples did long ago. Because in our Gospel reading on this last Sunday of Epiphany, Jesus leads His disciples up a mountain and is Transfigured right before their eyes.

This account is shared in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They record that Jesus took Peter, James and John high up on a mountain where they were alone. And He was changed to reveal to them, that while He was yet in His human nature, He still retained all His glory and majesty. Even His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And while the disciples did their best to keep their eyes on Jesus, as they looked at Him, they also noticed that both Moses and the prophet Elijah were there with Him. That must’ve been an awesome sight.

Some people go out to visit the Rocky Mountains, or they drive along the Blue Ridge parkway in order to look out over the beauty

of God's creation. To look for miles over hills and valleys to experience a "mountain top" view that leaves them with a sense of awe and wonder, feeling closer to God. But as Christians, we don't necessarily have to go somewhere to feel closer to God. We can be in awe of His glory and Majesty, and feel closer to Him, when He comes to us. God often comes to us when we're in awe of His glory and majesty. When also talk about "mountain top" experiences in which we feel closer to God. When we do so, we are in awe of His glory and majesty and because of that, we often feel closer to Him.

We can only imagine what it must've been like for Peter, James and John as they saw their "Rabbi" change from someone who was like them to one who was literally glowing from head to toe. It wouldn't have been something that they easily forgot, because Jesus was talking to Moses and Elijah, who were in their glorified state. It a kind of foretaste of what the disciples truly had hoped for all along when they were following Jesus. But it became too much for them to take in and they were overwhelmed with fear. So Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."(Mark 9:5) Before Jesus answered, a cloud appeared and said to them, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!"(Mark 9:7)

God speaks to us through His Word. Like us, the disciples knew that when Jesus spoke, His Word had the power to transform lives. You might think that Peter, James and John might have been overjoyed to have this mountain top experience with Jesus. But instead, it was too much for them and their joy suddenly turned to fear. Why do you suppose this was the case? Their reaction was similar to Isaiah when he was in God's presence. When he was in the Throne Room of God, he experienced this overwhelming fear as well. He said, "Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man

of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:5) Isaiah’s fear was that because of his sin, it was impossible for him to be in God’s presence. Sometimes when we’ve sinned, we can feel that way as well. And so, while Peter, James and John desired an even closer experience with God, their joy turned to awe and fear of the glory of God.

But suddenly, as the text tells us, “when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.” (Mark 9:8) Jesus alone. Jesus simply hadn’t lost any of divine majesty in His incarnation, instead He allows His glory to shine through His human nature to Peter, James and John. He is there in their time of need, and is there for us in our time of need as well. Because in His glory, Jesus freely chose death and resurrection for our sakes. So that we might have forgiveness and through His death and resurrection we might rightly stand in God’s presence without fear, worry or guilt. One day, having been faithful unto death, this will be our ultimate, and uninterrupted “mountain top” experience.

For now, we know from His Word, that He is with us through His Word and Sacraments. And it’s this new mountain top perspective that has been shared with us by faith that enables us to listen and obey His Word. In doing so, we’re baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection to live abundant lives toward an eternal glory. And like Dale Walter, whose life we celebrated yesterday, as well as those who have gone before us, when we eat the bread and drink of the cup of the Altar, we proclaim His death until He comes again.

Until that day, we go out into the mission field to share this Gospel message through our words and actions. We do so in order for others to be able to have the life God intended. So that they too might be enlightened, listen to the Word of God, and to be able to stand in His Glorious presence without fear but with an overwhelming joy in their hearts.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. The day when we read that while Jesus was in human nature, He was transfigured into all His glory and gives to us a new perspective, an everlasting hope, from this temporal life to life eternal, both now and forever.

And now may that peace which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in that same Christ Jesus, until He comes again to be with Him forever.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.