
LOOK TO JESUS**Sermon for the Transfiguration of Jesus, 2022****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 our sermon today is our Gospel we just heard read, 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 through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In our Gospel for today, we heard once again about the transfiguration of Jesus, where He took three of His disciples - Peter, James, and John - up a high mountain. There His appearance was changed - that's what “transfiguration” means. The Greek word for this transfiguration is the source of the English word

metamorphosis. We use that word to describe an insect's stages as it becomes a butterfly. Still, that process does not adequately describe what happened to Jesus here. Anyhow, Luke writes how "**the appearance of His face changed.**" In his account of the transfiguration, Matthew writes, "*His face shone like the sun*" (Matthew 17:2).

So what is this picture telling us? He who created the sun and the moon and the stars now shine with brilliance. Christ is revealed in His divine glory as the very Son of God. "*God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.*" This is a glory that Christ always had from eternity, from before the foundation of the world. But it is a glory which had been hidden once the Son of God had become flesh and made His dwelling among us. Jesus did not always or fully manifest His glory during the days of His earthly ministry, but on this day, on this mountain, He did. He pulled back the curtain, so to speak, and His disciples were shown that this is indeed the eternal Son of God. They beheld the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, in His divine majesty. The One "*by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven*" - this man Jesus is here revealed as true God in the presence of His disciples.

Luke goes on to write, "**His clothing became dazzling white.**" This shows the holiness and purity of the Son of God come in the flesh. Jesus is without sin, unstained by transgression or misdeed. He is perfect in righteousness. Jesus has perfectly kept all the commandments. As a man, He has fulfilled God's Law. Jesus loves the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength. He loves His neighbour as Himself. Righteous, holy, spotless, unblemished - that's who Jesus is, and His dazzling white clothes here reflect that fact.

But what if we look at our own garments in that light? What do we see? We see that our clothing is soiled, stained with sin. And we cannot get that stain out, no matter how hard we try. The Bible says that "*all our righteous actions are like a filthy garment*" (Is. 64:6). "All our righteous actions!" If even our best deeds, done in the flesh, are considered filthy garments in God's sight, where does that leave us? Sin is a permanent stain that even our most noble efforts cannot remove.

Therefore, the good news is that Jesus has kept the Law in our place. He has done what you and I cannot do. He has kept God's Law of love *perfectly*. Love for God, love for neighbour. We don't do it as we should. But Jesus did, and He did it for us. His righteousness gets transferred to our account.

So the first picture we see in the transfiguration is that of Jesus, His face shining like the sun and His clothes as white as light. Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God in the flesh, is revealed in His divine glory.

Now, what else do we see? **“Suddenly two men were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah.”**

Moses and Elijah appear. What are they doing here? They haven't been around for centuries! But now, for this unique occasion, God brings them into the picture. Moses, the great deliverer, who had led Israel out of bondage in Egypt and up to the Promised Land. Moses, the great law-giver, who at Mount Sinai had given Israel the Ten Commandments straight from God. Moses, the greatest of the prophets, but who had also told Israel, *“The LORD, your God, will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your fellow-Israelites. You shall listen to Him!”* (Deut. 18:15). And now, here that Prophet is, the One who would be even greater than Moses. That's why God has Moses standing there next to Jesus. It's as though God is saying: *“Here He is, the One Moses was talking about. The One you now must listen to. He will fulfil the Law for you. He will bring you out of bondage, the bondage of sin and death. This Jesus will lead you to, and into, the Promised Land of heaven.”* Yes, here is One greater than Moses and One greater than Elijah. Elijah was another great prophet from Israel's past. Remember how Elijah had been taken bodily to heaven without dying¹, and now he appeared with Jesus in glory.

All of God's dealings with Israel, all of salvation history, finds its goal and fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. He is what it all was pointing ahead to, driving at, moving toward. That's what the presence of Moses and Elijah here is signalling. All of Israel's history leads to this man alone, Jesus. For later, when the disciples look up, they see **“Jesus all alone.”**

¹ 2 Kings 2:11-18

“Jesus all alone.” If you want to know where to look for your salvation, look to no one but Jesus only. If you want to know what the focus and the purpose, and what the point of the whole Bible is, then **look to Jesus**. Look to Jesus, not as a law-giver. We already have Moses for that. Look to Jesus, not as an example, at least not primarily. Look to Jesus for who He is and what He had come to do. Who is He? He is our Saviour, the Saviour of the world. What had He come to do? To do what you and I shall never be able to do, and that is, to save us from our sins and to give us His life, His righteousness, forgiveness for our sins, and life with Him forever. Who is able to do this? Only **“Jesus all alone.”**

Then there is one more thing we see in the picture at the transfiguration. A cloud. Luke writes, **“a cloud came and overshadowed them.”** Matthew notes further that it was a “bright” cloud.² Not a dark and threatening cloud, like the storm clouds on Mount Sinai when God had given Moses the Ten Commandments. No, this is life-giving Gospel, not condemning Law. A bright cloud. The presence of God - not in a threatening way – but in a saving way. The presence of God surrounding us with His love, His protection, and His presence to guard and guide us - like the pillar of cloud that had led Israel through the wilderness. In Christ, we have the presence of God with us, to lead us all the way through the wilderness of this world, all the way home to heaven.

So there is the picture. Jesus’ face changing and shining like the sun, and His clothes becoming dazzling white. Moses and Elijah are there, telling us that Christ is the goal and focus of God’s plan of salvation. The bright cloud of God’s presence, His saving presence surrounding us. That’s the picture; that’s what we see.

Now, what do we hear? Are there any words? A voice comes from the bright cloud, saying, **“This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!”** This, of course, is the voice of the heavenly Father. The Father’s voice, testifying to His Son, approving of this Jesus. **“This is My Son.”** The Father loves the Son with perfect love. He always has, and always will, and now He testifies to His love for Jesus as His Son goes forward with His saving mission, which is to go to the cross, to save sinful mankind. Moses and Elijah **“were talking about His**

² Matthew 17:5

departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem.” The time had come for Jesus to suffer and die on our behalf, and the Father is saying that He is well pleased with what His Son was about to accomplish. God’s good pleasure is shown in sending His Son Jesus to do this great work.

God is telling us here to what measure He would go to rescue us. He’s saying He would give His only Son, His beloved Son, to die for us. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). *“However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

And so the Father says of Christ, **“This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!”** Yes, listen to Him! Listen, disciples, as Jesus now tells you, He must go to Jerusalem, where He will suffer and die. For this journey to Jerusalem, this way to the cross is how God’s plan of love will be carried out. Yes, sinners, one and all, listen to God’s beloved Son Jesus Christ, when He says today, *“Come to Me, all you who are working hard and carrying a heavy burden, and I shall give you rest!”* (Matthew 11:28). Listen to Jesus and *keep on listening*, for He alone has the words of eternal life.

Today we have been with the disciples on the holy mountain for the transfiguration of our Lord. What have we seen? Here we have beheld our bright and shining Lord, our beautiful Saviour, Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God who has come in the flesh. He is the goal and focus of all salvation history. In Him, we are surrounded by the bright cloud of God’s gracious presence. We lift up our eyes and see no one but Jesus only. And what do we hear? We hear the Father’s voice, testifying to His beloved Son. And so we hear how much the Father loves us, that He would send His Son to suffer and die for us. And He tells us to listen to Jesus and to keep on listening, for our Lord has more words for us to hear, our whole life long.

Today on the holy mountain is pictured for us in the transfiguration of our Lord our glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ, showing us exactly who it is who will go to the cross for us. And if it is God’s own Son who suffers and dies and rises again for us, if it’s Jesus who speaks words of life for us to listen to - well, that’s the best thing we could ever see. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR TRANSFIGURATION

Almighty God, Your ears are always open to the prayers of Your people. Hear now the cries of Your children, as we bring before You our needs of body and soul.

Above all else, we praise You for the precious gift of Your Son. Today in particular we bless You for the message of His transfiguration. Through this mighty sign give to us and all people a clearer vision and a higher knowledge of Christ's person and mission. Give us eyes of faith that see the glory of His deity, and the glory that came through His cross, and lead us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Grant that, as we continue to see the glory of His person in Your Word and Sacrament, we may know and believe in Him as the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, and the visible likeness of Your very being. May we continually hear the voice of Jesus Your prophet still today, that our faith may constantly be renewed. Grant that, as Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory, each of us may die in faith, share in the power of Christ's resurrection, and be eventually transformed into ever greater glory.

Let Your Spirit, who inspired the prophets and apostles, live in our poor bodies. Transform our weak, sinful lives so that they shine with goodness, purity, and righteousness. Transform our minds, eyes, judgment, and our whole persons, so that they may reflect the mind of Christ. Take away our sickness, pains, wounds, and hurts. Take away our disappointments, defeats, and despair. Take away our sorrows and grieving. Take away our pride, anger, hatred and fear. Take away our selfishness and envy, our laziness and unconcern for others. Take away all our weaknesses, and turn them by the touch of Jesus into impulses, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds that shine with godliness and new life.

Grant Your blessing to Your church. Especially bless all who belong to the fellowship of this congregation. Be present with all our members and graciously supply what they need. Grant that we, and all who bear the name of Christ, may

daily offer to You acceptable spiritual sacrifices of repentance, thanksgiving, and obedience.

Look mercifully on our state and our nation. Deliver us from those who love evil and whose aim is unrighteousness. Grant that the whole world may know Your will, and all nations may know Your salvation.

Have mercy on those among us who are sick, lonely, or depressed. Teach them to look to You for healing, comfort, and stronger hope for the glory to come.

Loving Father, as we trust that You are near to us when we call to You, hear our prayer, and grant all our petitions for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

¹ Then Moses went up from the waterless plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him all the land, from Gilead to Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negev and the broad area, which is the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palm-trees, as far as Zoar. ⁴ Then the LORD told him: "This is the land that I have solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with an oath, saying: 'I shall give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross over there."

⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab as the LORD had said. ⁶ He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-Peor, and to this day no one knows where his grave is. ⁷ Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyesight had not become dim and his vigour had not diminished. ⁸ The Israelites mourned for Moses on the waterless plains of Moab for thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.

⁹ Joshua, the son of Nun, was filled with a spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him. The people of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. ¹⁰ A prophet like Moses has not arisen since then in Israel. The LORD knew him face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all

the miraculous signs and wonders that the LORD had sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to his whole land. ¹² Moses was also unequalled for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that he performed while all Israel witnessed them.

Hebrews 3:1-6

¹ Therefore, fellow-Christians, who are holy and share the heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession! ² He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God's household. ³ For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. ⁵ Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant, to testify to what would be said in the future, ⁶ but Christ is faithful as a Son over God's household. We are also His house if we hold on to our confidence and to the hope about which we boast.

Luke 9:28-36

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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.

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