

"The Great Transformation"

Text: Mark 9:2-9

May you be given the faith and the wisdom to recognize both the power and the love of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

The text for our consideration this morning reveals to us the event we celebrate on this day, the Transfiguration of Jesus. That great event – our text – is found recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the Ninth Chapter:

^{ESV}(**Mark 9:2-9**) *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.*

This is the Word of God. Concerning this very Word of God, the Apostle Peter said that we would **"do well to pay attention as a to light shining in a dark place."** We therefore focus our attention on these verbally inspired words from our God as we also pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

Christians need to engage in a relentless struggle to avoid becoming lazy and complacent in our faith life. What, for example, did you get out of the reading of the text for this morning? Anything at all, or did you hear or read it with just sort of a numb sense of comfortable religiosity? This is admittedly a rather blunt question, but sometimes it takes that to wake us from our spiritual lethargy.

When sinful human beings encounter the vast panorama of God's Word, they actually see very little of what is really there. Even those who spend time in study can come to imagine that what they have witnessed is really of very little practical value. Oh the writing is pretty good (in their humble

estimation) and there are contained therein some solid bits of moralizing, but all in all the Bible is to them an over-hyped piece of real estate.

Untold wealth lies just below the surface of God's Holy Word. All men from birth lack both the vision to recognize the potential and the tools to extract all of those divine riches. The result is a catastrophic waste of divine riches. How, after all, can anyone put a price tag on that which rescues us from an eternity in hell and carries us instead to an unimaginably blissful paradise that never ends? How can anyone accurately evaluate that which not only saves us, but which is designed also to comfort, encourage, and protect us? The unparalleled wealth given to us by our gracious and merciful God will forever remain hidden from the unbelieving world, unless and until they are taught to extract it.

I can't speak for you, but I miss out on so much of what our Lord would give us in his Word simply because I fail to expend the time and effort necessary. In a busy world my tendency is to skim past, flip through, pass over great riches that are just lying there, waiting to be picked up and made my own. Digging into God's Word is what makes the Scriptures come alive, and it is how we learn, grow, and are strengthened for the work and the struggles that lie ahead.

All of which sounds good, but what does it really mean? In connection with this morning's text, it means that we are supposed to listen and read with the understanding that God's Word always represents a treasure that is to be mined. To do so, we sometimes need to tear it apart and reassemble it. It means that we should, upon hearing the words of this particular text, ask (and then answer) questions like, *"What does it mean to be transfigured? What does it mean that Jesus was transfigured? Why was Jesus transfigured? What were Moses and Elijah doing there, and why did Jesus first invite Peter, James, and John to witness these sublime sights, and then tell them (at least for the time being) to keep the event to themselves?"*

To be transfigured means, literally, to be changed, usually on the outside and usually for the better – but that bit of information really doesn't help us much. We already pretty much figured that out from a simple reading of the text. That which was witnessed here in Jesus was infinitely more than just a brief, outward glowing. In fact the Greek word here describing what took place in Jesus was carried nearly intact into the English as *metamorphosis*. What those three privileged apostles were fortunate enough to witness was a glimpse of Jesus with

his divine glory shining through. They were seeing the majesty that Jesus always possessed, but before and after this event it was encapsulated in and, to a certain extent, hidden by the human body that he had taken on.

The vision absolutely shocked Peter, James, and John, it was that sublime. We miss a key component of this text – indeed this entire *event* – if we fail to pause for a bit to take this in. The magnificence that these men here witnessed defied description, but our inspired text did what it could, given the bounds of human communication: ***“His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.”*** In his account, Matthew gave this description: ***“His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.”*** Hold that thought, that image, for just a bit because we are going to come back to it.

Why was Jesus transfigured? Both for Jesus and for you and me. When we hear that it is Transfiguration Sunday, we immediately ought to recognize that we once again stand at the door of Lent. The event provided Jesus with a special strengthening just before he undertook the final leg of his great and incomparable journey of humiliation and self-sacrifice. That journey carried him from the womb of Mary to the cross of Calvary. The Transfiguration undoubtedly therefore served as a great spiritual strengthening before Jesus had to suffer the terrors of Good Friday.

What then are we supposed to learn from the fact that it was Moses and Elijah who spoke to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Moses was the giver of the Law; Elijah was arguably the greatest of the prophets. In Moses and Elijah then we have a representation of ***“the Law and the Prophets,”*** referred to on more than one occasion by Jesus himself. So also we read in Luke 16:16, ***“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”*** Paul also picked up the expression, as we read in Romans 3:21, ***“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”***

The day of Moses and Elijah, those who symbolized ***“the law and the Prophets,”*** had drawn to a close. A new order, a new covenant, was being established. The Old was passing off to the New. In this we recognize that the Law and the Prophets have given way to Jesus Christ. What does that mean, personally, to you and me? It means that the Old Covenant, with all of its demands and condemnations, has given way to the New Covenant. This New Covenant says simply: Your sins are forgiven. Jesus has paid for them. Salvation is yours, you are reconciled to God. Gone – every single one of your sins.

Again, don't hold these promises from our God at arm's length. Draw them into your heart and make them both real and personal. Don't just hear that your sins are forgiven in general terms. Think of sins that you committed this past week. Those sins are included in what we are talking about here. Those sins have been forgiven. Think now of a very big and very black sin from your past – a sin that still makes you blush to think that you were capable of such lawlessness or perversion. That, too, is the sin that has been forgiven.

Why did Jesus invite Peter, James, and John to witness this event? The Apostles, who spent about three years at the Savior's side, had to face a problem unique to their situation. Because of their physical, day to day contact with the man Jesus, it must have been difficult for them to recognize, moment by moment, that Jesus was both true man *and true God*. How difficult it must have been for them to remember, having seen Jesus eat, sleep, laugh, cry, and all the rest - how difficult to remember that in Jesus ***“dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”*** But not after this – not after they witnessed the Transfiguration. Jesus might well have invited Peter, James, and John to witness his Transfiguration as a remedy, in part, for this very problem. Never again would these three men forget that Jesus was more than just a man. Through their witness we today can never forget that the man Jesus, who was nailed to the cross, was also *“very God of very God, begotten, not made. Being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”* (Words from the Nicene Creed) What a fitting reminder, as we enter the season of Lent, that it was *God himself* who offered his life for man.

The next very personal application of this section of God's Word is the fact that this very Son of God is the one who died for *my* sins and even today serves as *my* intercessor at the Father's right hand. The Bible tells us that ***“if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*** (1 John 2:1) While on earth, Jesus set aside the glory that was his, along with the full use of his divine powers. Here we are given a brief glimpse of the power and majesty that are his. Through the eyes of Peter, James and John we see Jesus *as he is now*. Jesus himself told us, after his resurrection, ***“All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth...”*** The great news for you and me in all of this is that this is the same Jesus who intercedes for you and me right at this very moment. Can not such a God do for us whatever is best for us? Wouldn't we do well to remember the picture of Jesus' shining in power and glory on the mount when we are tried and tested here in time? Next time a problem confronts you – a regular Gordian Knot whopper of a problem – look not to the Jesus lying

helpless in the manger, nor even to the cadaverous looking Jesus dragging his own cross through the streets of Jerusalem. Look to the Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and there recognize the power he now wields – the power he has promised to use on your behalf. Shall not such a God be able to accomplish for you whatever is best for your soul?

When Peter, James, and John had seen and experienced the great glory of the Savior on that Transfiguration Hill, they wanted to stay right there – the sight was that spectacular. Peter offered to build homes for everyone right there on the spot. Jesus would have none of it - not from Peter and certainly not from us. Souls are being strengthened here in this church building, but souls are dying out there, and each one of us has the remedy, the truth, they need to escape an eternity in hell. Our Lord Jesus wants us to expend the same effort at reaching others that we would want others to expend in bringing us the Words of life. The Transfiguration tells us, *"You've met with the Lord, now go and tell your neighbor what you've seen."*

Our God knows full well that the job he gave us to do would not be easy, so he left us with something to lighten our step and ease our burden as we walk the long path toward home. You will recall that you were supposed to hold that vision of Jesus in your mind's eye, and that we would return to it later. We return to that thought now, and here is the reason, given to us by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Philippians (3:20-21): ***"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."*** Do you recall that splendid vision of Jesus as he was transfigured? Because of what that same Jesus has done for you and me, one day soon the same sort of gloried body will be ours. God's Word promises that our bodies will be transformed to be like his. What an incredible promise. Absolutely beyond imagination – yet altogether true, for our Savior-God has promised.

Thanks and praise be to God, who gives such great gifts, and such great promises, to men. Let this be a part of the joy that gladdens your heart on the long journey home. Amen.

ESV(2 Kings 2:1-12a) Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. ³ And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." ⁴ Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." ⁶ Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. ⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." ¹⁰ And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." ¹¹ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more.

ESV(2 Corinthians 4:3-6) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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Transfiguration Sunday – February 11, 2024

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 135 (Red Hymnal)

"'Tis Good Lord to Be Here"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (2 Kings 2:1-12a) This morning is Transfiguration Sunday. Two men appeared with Jesus in the bright cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah. Our first reading speaks of the Prophet Elijah's unique departure from this earth. Note that what made Elijah great was the Spirit of the Lord that resided in him. As did Elisha, we would be wise to seek that same Spirit from our God.

Psalm 2 (Supplement page 30)

The Second Lesson: (2 Corinthians 4:3-6) Our second reading explains the seemingly impenetrable darkness of unbelief that clouds both the thoughts and the judgment of those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior. There is, as Paul reminds us, nothing wrong with the Bible's message. The problem lies alone with mankind's stubborn refusal to believe the truth. Thank God for the light he has shone in you.

The Confession of Faith -

Nicene Creed – (Supplement page 5)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 719 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak"

The Sermon – Mark 9:2-9 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Great Transformation"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 325 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"O Thou that Hear'st when Sinners Cry"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 179 (Red Hymnal)

"On My Heart Imprint Thine Image"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (24) Average (42)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour:
Monday	-10:00 a.m.	– Study Conference in Bowdle
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Ash Wednesday Service
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Teacher Matthew Thurow has been called to the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran High School and College. Teacher Ross Kok has returned the call from Gethsemane of Saginaw. Pastor Paul Krause is considering the calls from Calvary of Marquette and St. Peter's of Iron River. Messiah of Hales Corners has called Teacher Kendra Rodebaugh. Teacher Noah Ohlmann has accepted the call to teach the lower grades at Grace of Valentine. Messiah of Eau Claire has called Teacher Matthew Kranz to teach grades 5-6.

Ash Wednesday – The season of Lent begins this week with our Ash Wednesday service. Confirmation Class will begin at 5:45 pm through Easter.

Common Cup Survey – If you haven't already done so and wish to participate, please fill out the survey on the mailbox table.

Care Package – A care package is being prepared for our lone out-of-town student, Aiden Pfennig. Please drop off whatever food items you would like to add to the care package today.