

Transfiguration Sunday

February 7, 2016

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord God, before the suffering and death of your one and only Son, you revealed his glory on the holy mountain. Grant that we who bear his cross on earth may behold by faith the light of his heavenly glory and so be changed into his likeness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! A voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him." Alleluia! (Mark 9:7)

**Sermon Text:** 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

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<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

You see the name for this Sunday at the top page inside your bulletin. Earlier I mentioned that today is "Transfiguration Sunday." In our gospel lesson you read that Jesus' appearance and clothing radiates like a bright white flash of lightning. Old Testament figures Moses and Elijah suddenly appear and talk with Jesus. Then a voice booms: "*This is my Son, my chosen One; listen to him.*" As spontaneously as it all begins, this brilliantly awesome scene instantly vanishes— and it may leave you with a funny feeling.

If anything, this Bible account is strange. No, not that God's appointed writers got the facts wrong. No, not that the words are difficult to understand; I am sure that you could easily envision this dazzling scene with its many different reactions. Instead, as clear as these words and images are, a far more overarching question might spring to mind: Why this? I mean, what are you expected to take home from this reading? How does what you see on this mountaintop tie into your uncertainty about the presidential primaries or about tensions in your relationships or into those random bouts of personal despair? What is the purpose behind Jesus standing in this remarkable scene?

Today you see a fuller picture of Jesus' saving work. On this Mount of Transfiguration he pulls back the veil and gives you a fresh glimpse of why you can anchor your complete confidence in him. **LIGHT SHINES IN OUR HEARTS!** *removing spiritual blindness, revealing certain knowledge.*

Over these past four weeks of Epiphany, you had the opportunity to see what Jesus did from the time he is born up to the time he prepares for his suffering and death. These individual events reveal a Savior who brings real, lasting peace to your life. Jesus powerfully transforms water into wine— not for the purpose of impressing crowds— but to reveal a power that still is capable of answering your every need ([John 2:1-11](#)). Jesus

unveils an unending storeroom loaded with spiritual riches— that he unburdens all oppressive guilt from you, the poor sinner, making you able to claim heaven as your eternal home ([Luke 4:18-21](#)). Just last week you witnessed Jesus violently rejected for his message, but marveled at his determination to share this exact same message with you ([Luke 4:28-30](#)). Our church season of “Epiphany” really reveals two key truths: (1) why you need a Savior to rescue you and (2) why Jesus is that Savior.

The apostle Paul expounds on those truths in his second letter to the Corinthians. He had visited the Christian congregation in the Greek city of Corinth once before. More than that, he centered everyone’s thoughts on the very fact that because Jesus died and rose again, Christians have the peace of knowing God will raise them to eternal life ([1 Corinthians 15:1-22](#)).

That is a good message. In fact, we call this the “gospel message.” The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” This “good news” is not just something that makes you happy for only a short time (like how the happiness from Christmas eventually wears off). Jesus has washed away your every sin, without asking you to help him or pay him back for it; he has done it all for you!

Paul pointed people to Jesus; he did not secretly hide Jesus. That did not stop many from taking their eyes off of what Jesus does. Many exchanged Jesus’ saving work for the rules of God’s Old Testament. They ate certain foods, stayed away from touching certain animals, gave a certain percentage of offerings, and obeyed about 400 more laws than God ever commanded. Life’s focus was to do as much as possible to earn God’s favor and prove self-worthiness for heaven.

On the surface, this kind of lifestyle does not really look like such a big deal. Yet, Paul sets problem forth quite clearly. **And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.** Trying to earn forgiveness by acting more moral or by giving so much to friends and community is really an attempt to enter heaven by some other way than Jesus. Paul writes to the Corinthians because they were rejecting the good news of Jesus and were ultimately rejecting their Savior! This is a big deal!

It still is a big deal! You do not have to go far to hear the worldly sermon: “every religion is a good and right religion (as long as it does not hurt anyone physically or emotionally).” This seemingly harmless message does not come from God. **The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** God’s Word is the only light and it so clearly reveals Jesus as the only absolute Way to heaven. Yet, that light is so desperately hidden. People invest obscene amounts of self-worth in money and popularity— as if life consists only in these things. Family events take a higher priority than the one single hour of worship each week. Many pride themselves on knowledge— even if their knowledge is misguidedly wrong. False teachers continue pouring out into the world, preaching a message that does not come from God, but rather from self-interests.

Do you wonder what Paul means with the phrase “the god of this age?” Well, what is a “god?” God Almighty says: “*You shall have no other gods*” ([Exodus 20:3](#)). Martin Luther defined a “god” as something upon which you set your heart and trust.

Has the “god of this age” touched you? Do you find self-worth tied to your possessions or social standing? Do you ever argue with yourself that God really does not care when you worship or if you (ever) worship— just come whenever you have spare time? Do you shape life around what you feel God would say or what God actually says? Do you hesitate to warn your children about a sinful lifestyle because the god of this age has convinced you sharing your faith is “forcing your beliefs on someone else” and that you would come off as some strange “religious fanatic?”

If our thoughts and actions do not flow from the word of God, then which “god” are we following? The struggle is always there to extinguish the **LIGHT SHINING IN OUR HEARTS** and to walk in *spiritual blindness*.

No wonder Jesus stands on this Mount of Transfiguration! No wonder he pulls back his veil just a bit to show us that he is the only true God! No wonder he radiates brighter than the brightest sun! He *removes spiritual blindness* by being the **LIGHT SHINING IN OUR HEARTS!**

The Bible shows you Jesus— the living image of God. When you see Jesus, you see God himself! Yes, you have not seen Jesus with your very own eyes, but you read about Jesus’ ministry in Scripture. Through the Word of God **LIGHT SHINES IN OUR HEARTS!** *revealing certain knowledge*.

Remember the two key truths Epiphany reveals: (1) why you need a Savior to rescue you and (2) why Jesus is that Savior. Peering into our own hearts, we recognize the many times we have listened to the god of this age. We all-too-often remember listening to his calls to trust our own thoughts or force God’s Words to fit our words. We know we need a Savior to make able to stand before God— and we have a Savior who does just that!

**[W]e do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.** Jesus obeys every single commandment Moses brings down from Mount Sinai. Never once is Jesus going to hear chastisement from the mouth of Elijah the prophet. No, he hears nothing but God’s stamp of approval on his entire life.

He applies his God-pleasing life to your account. His willing obedience to God’s commandments is now your willing obedience to God’s commandments. His love for God is your love for God. God’s approval on him is now the approval which rests on you!

You know this and you believe it. **For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.** Remember the very beginning of creation. Nothing existed—only the eternal God. Then God commands: “Let there be light” and light instantly bursts forth ([Genesis 1:1-3](#)).

The same God who created light has spoken his Word and that Word has touched your heart and has created faith in your heart. The spiritual darkness of uncertainty has vanished. **LIGHT SHINES IN OUR HEARTS!** *revealing certain knowledge*.

That is what light does. It pierces through the unknown and reveals the certainty which lies all around it. Jesus brings just three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. While there, he shines like the sun. His clothes become bleach-white. Moses and Elijah

suddenly appear. This terrifically awesome sight does not randomly happen; Jesus is not running a kind of circus-act. Rather, he reveals something certain to you: he is God in flesh.

In just a few days, you will embark on Calvary's journey again. You will see the Savior suffer in ways you have never suffered. You will watch helplessly as he takes on the blame and accusations which were meant for you. You will follow him up a tall hill where he is hung beside two criminals in order to be made an example of. While you live thousands of years past this one event, the images will hit your ears and heart.

While he comforts his disciples about the things they will soon see, he reveals an even greater glory. You and I know how the Good Friday/Easter Sunday account goes: Jesus dies and rises again. Yet, Jesus reveals the glory on this mount to reveal a glory still in effect. Your Savior continues holding power over all things. Sitting in the doctor's office means that he sits right beside you. We may not know what will happen at the 2016 election, but we know that God already knows what will happen and that he will continue blessing you despite the results. Your relationships might be strained, but your Savior remains patient in his relationship with you. He continues to patiently forgive you. This relationship is one you imitate in your life.

If anything, Transfiguration Sunday is a bit different. No, not that God's appointed writers got the facts wrong. No, not that the words are difficult to understand; I am sure that you could easily envision this brilliant scene with its many different reactions. Rather, as clear as these words and images are, a far more overarching question might spring to mind: Why this? What are you expected to take home from this reading?

You take home this central truth: Jesus is God. He is the God-man who will take away your sins on Calvary. He is the God-man who will rise again. He is the God-man who powerfully rises into heaven and rules as King of the universe. On this Mount of Transfiguration you see a glimpse of the full glory he now has as God. More than that, you see Jesus reveal a glimpse of the glory he possesses for you. He is your God; you belong to him.

Today see the fuller picture of Jesus' saving work. On this Mount of Transfiguration he pulls back the veil and gives you a fresh glimpse of why you can anchor any confidence in him. **LIGHT SHINES IN OUR HEARTS!** *removing spiritual blindness, revealing certain knowledge.*