

The Lord's Message: Christ Unveiled

Date: February 27, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Luke 9:28-36

Today, we are celebrating Transfiguration Sunday. This Sunday is the bridge between the Season of Epiphany (the manifestation of Jesus) and the Season of Lent (our preparation for Easter). Lent begins this Wednesday with the Service of Ashes. The transfiguration of Jesus is the apex of Christ unveiling Himself as the Son of God.

Let us pray.

In this selected passage of text, we start off with the author, Luke, saying "about eight days after Jesus said this," this begs the question what happened eight days before this. This chapter begins with Jesus sending out the 12 disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit to being the work of ministry. We are told in verse 6, "So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere." After they have returned Jesus takes them to a secluded town called Bethsaida. The crowds find out where Jesus and the disciples are and they go to them. Jesus spends time teaching them about the kingdom of God and healing those in need. It is getting late and Jesus knows that the people are hungry. There is not enough food to feed this crowd of five thousand men plus women and children. The only food that they can find is a small boys "Happy Meal" of five loaves of bread and two fish. This is all that Jesus needs. Jesus performs a miracle by multiplying the bread and the fish and feeds the crowd. There are even leftovers of twelve baskets of food. The crowd may not be aware of this, but the disciples are.

Sometime after this miracle, Jesus asked His disciples a question, one that each of us must answer for ourselves, "Who do you say I am?" Peter says, "The Christ of God." Jesus tells them to not to tell anyone this truth. In verse 22, Jesus goes on to tell them that, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." The disciples are besides themselves in disbelief.

Jesus knows this. In verse 23, Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." The disciples have been on a roller coaster of emotions. They went from being uncertain about whether they could handle the ministry to see that with the Holy Spirit with them that they could accomplish great miracles. They are eyewitnesses to the miracles that Jesus was doing. The roller coaster continues with Jesus telling them of his painful death at the hands of the church leaders to His resurrection. If that was not enough, Jesus tells them to deny themselves and follow Him. If I were them, my head would be spinning. There would also be a lot of disbelief.

The Lord knows us better than we know ourselves. Jesus knew what His disciples were thinking. He wanted to prove to them that He is the Son of God. So that there would be no doubts. Jesus takes three of those disciples closest to him, Peter, James and John, up on a mountain to pray. On the night of Jesus' arrest, these same disciples would go with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. They might have often gone with Jesus to pray. These disciples were Jesus' inner core.

This was a prayer meeting was unlike any they had ever encountered before. As Jesus is praying, His appearance and clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning. I remember that when Moses was in the presence of God, Moses' face would glow and he would have to veil his face. We find this in **Exodus 34: 29-35**. This glow from Moses' face would dim with time. With Jesus, the glow is coming out of Him and affecting His whole body, and even His clothes. Christ is being unveiled in the presence of His disciples. Beside the Gospels, there are two other passages in scripture describing the transfiguration of Jesus. Those are found in **Revelation 1:12-16** and in **Revelation 22: 3b-5**.

Moses' face glowed, because he was in the presence of God. Jesus' body and clothes glowed because He is the Son of God. Moses was transformed. Jesus was transfigured. The Bible tells us that God is light and love. In **1 John 1: 5**, the scripture says that God is light. In **1 John 4: 8-9**, the scripture says that God is love. The makeup of God is light and love. The difference between transformed and transfigured. The light of God shined on Moses changing his appearance. Since Jesus is the Son of God, the light of God was concealed by Jesus' human body. In the process of transfiguration, the Light of God shine out of Jesus. In **Genesis 1: 27**, we are created in the image of God. If God's makeup is light and love and we are created in God's image, then we are made up of light and love.

In **Matthew 5:14-16**, Jesus tells us this fact. God's DNA is in us and in every human being, because we are made in the image of God. Jesus tells us that we need to not hide that light, but to let our light shine and not place it under a bowl or, as some Biblical translation would say, a basket.

Now, the Bible is not talking about a physical bowl or basket. The Bible is not saying that we purposely walk around with a bowl or basket on our head. What Jesus is referring to is a spiritual bowl or basket.

This is my theological understanding of the way I believe that God works in all of us. First, every person has God's DNA (His light and love) inside of them. At times, believer and unbeliever display God's DNA. People who do not believe in Christ, display God's light and love. All people are capable of doing good things. I will not argue that fact with any of you. The difference for a believer in Jesus is that when we accept Jesus into our hearts, God provides the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in us to remove those sins that are blocking God's DNA from shining out. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins. The Holy Spirit moves within us to confess those sins and to receive forgiveness. This is what the Apostle Paul calls the "New Creation" (**2 Corinthians 5:16-17**). The person that is a "New Creation" is on fire for the Lord. What usually happens though is that this life comes in and if they are not careful, they can fall back into their same situation. Then they will be worse than before. This is called back-sliding. We all do this. It is like a spiritual bowl or basket is put over God's DNA inside of us.

That spiritual bowl or basket are acts of not loving our neighbors, not being truthful, not listening to friends who try to correct us, not believing that God loves us, and not sharing our witness. The Good News is that we can be forgiven and work to remove this spiritual bowl or basket because of Jesus. During Lent, we will be working on what John Wesley calls "acts of piety." Acts of Piety are praying, fasting, reading God's love letter (The Bible) and by connecting with others in the community of faith. During our times of fasting, you should decide to give up something that is valuable to you in order to spend more time with God. I would also encourage you to decide what this action, event, or item is worth. Then every time you fast, put some money into a jar and donate it to a charity, such as Helping Hands or one of your choosing. In this way, our "acts of piety" become "acts of mercy." We can all be transformed to shine forth the light and love of God.

In closing, I would like to read a beautiful sonnet that my friend, and fellow Pen-Del Pastor, Doug Ridley has written to describe this event.

Transfiguration (a sonnet by Doug Ridley)

Intensest light – the son's own light: his face and robe shone brilliantly before the three upon the mountaintop. Then Prophecy and Law were there, to speak with him. The grace continued on: a cloud – God's own embrace - and voice – God's own – declaring him to be his Father's well-beloved Son; to be their light; their way – obeyed in every place.

And are we not amazed at this, God's sign to them, and us, before our Savior set his face toward Jerusalem, our debt of sin to pay – atoning yours and mine, redeeming us by love's own sacrifice, fulfilling law and prophecy's full price?

Christ was unveiled to us to show that Jesus is the Son of God. We can be transformed to shine and share God's light and love. Amen.