

Sunday Lesson – February 27, 2022

GOSPEL: Luke 9: 28-43

“Transfiguration of our Lord”



Context

“The transfiguration of Jesus follows immediately on the scene where Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah (Luke 9:20). That scene ends with Jesus’ teaching on the coming glory of God’s kingdom to be experienced by the disciples (9:26-27). The transfiguration scene provides a dramatic confirmation of Peter’s confession and a foretaste of the glory to be experienced when God’s kingdom is fully present.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord-3/commentary-on-luke-928-36-37-43-2)*

Insight

“Undoubtedly, the purpose of the transfiguration of Christ into at least a part of His heavenly glory was so that the “inner circle” of His disciples could gain a greater understanding of who Jesus was. Christ underwent a dramatic change in appearance in order that the disciples could behold Him in His glory. The disciples, who had only known Him in His human body, now had a greater realization of the deity of Christ, though they could not fully comprehend it. That gave them the reassurance they needed after hearing the shocking news of His coming death.

Symbolically, the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets. But God’s voice from heaven – “Listen to Him!” - clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. The One who is the new and living way is replacing the old – He is the fulfillment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, in His glorified form they saw a preview of His coming glorification and enthronement as King of kings and Lord of lords.” *(Excerpts from gotquestions.org/transfiguration.html)*

Gospel Reading

“About eight days after saying this, he climbed the mountain to pray, taking Peter, John, and James along. While he was in prayer, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became blinding white. At once two men were there talking with him. They turned out to be Moses and Elijah—and what a glorious appearance they made! They talked over his exodus, the one Jesus was about to complete in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Peter and those with him were slumped over in sleep. When they came to, rubbing their eyes, they saw Jesus in his glory and the two men standing with him. When Moses and Elijah had left, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, this is a great moment! Let’s build three memorials: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He blurted this out without thinking. While he was babbling on like this, a light-radiant cloud enveloped them. As they found themselves buried in the cloud, they became deeply aware of God. Then there was a voice out of the cloud: “This is my Son, the Chosen! Listen to him.” When the sound of the voice died away, they saw Jesus there alone. They were speechless. And they continued speechless, said not one thing to anyone during those days of what they had seen. When they came down off the mountain the next day, a big crowd was there to meet them. A man called from out of the crowd, “Please, please, Teacher, take a look at my son. He’s my only child. Often a spirit seizes him. Suddenly he’s screaming, thrown into convulsions, his mouth foaming. And then it beats him black-and-blue before it leaves. I asked your disciples to deliver him but they couldn’t.” Jesus said, “What a generation! No sense of God! No focus to your lives! How many times do I have to go over these things? How much longer do I have to put up with this? Bring your son here.” While he was coming, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into convulsions. Jesus stepped in, ordered the foul spirit gone, healed the boy, and handed him back to his father. They all shook their heads in

wonder, astonished at God's greatness, God's majestic greatness." The Message

What It Could Mean?

"One of the noteworthy aspects of verses 28-36 is that they are embedded in prayer. *Proseuchesthai* shows up twice right at the beginning. In the very moment that Jesus is praying, the appearance of both his face and clothing changes. Luke frequently centers epiphanies of Jesus' connection with God in prayer. Prayer, communion with God, is very often associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, beginning with baptism. It is the presence of God's Holy Spirit that empowers Jesus for healing, for the calling of the Twelve, for enduring the temptations, and for speaking truth.

That same brilliant spirit of God shines on and in Jesus and Moses and Elijah as they gather to speak of Jesus' coming exodus. All of Scripture is enlisted as pointing to the future passage through death to glory of God's anointed one. God's own faithfulness is borne out in the trustworthiness of Scripture, witnessing as it does to the suffering of the Messiah that precedes his glory.

Another important aspect of Luke's story is the number of terms having to do with looking and seeing (or the opposite). Because "glory" is a visible aspect of God's holiness and majesty, **eyewitnesses** were vital to handing on this experience of Jesus' tangible glory, a glory puzzling and yet hope-giving. This is a passage where seeing is very important but needs the support of God's voice to bring even limited understanding to the three followers. It might be noted that human voices, even as Peter, for example, tries to interpret what is happening before his eyes according to Scripture, are not able to articulate what has happened.

Since we are also invited to see, we are left trying to articulate all that the vision includes. There is no way to do that without reference to the word "exodus" in verse 31. While sometimes

translated as "departure," this word which occurs nowhere else in the gospels is too rich in nuance to simplify. Only Luke gives the content of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah, highlighting the importance of that conversation about exodus. Like Moses before him, Jesus is given an experience of God and God's majesty. Like Moses, in spite of being chosen, he is not granted easy passage.

The connections with Exodus (and with Elijah) remind hearers/readers that God will deliver God's people from slavery as often as God must do it. An exodus from under the power of any oppressor has a cost. Jesus must "set his face like a flint" to get to Jerusalem (9:51). The three disciples who will follow that road with him have seen the glory that awaits and find the path to Golgotha deeply confusing. Jesus' exodus will deliver even from the power of death, not just death-dealing powers-that-be, but death itself. That cannot be clear to Peter, James, and John until it has been accomplished." (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Sarah Henrich*)

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 17: 1-9 & Mark 9: 2-10](#) *Other Gospel versions of Transfiguration*
- [2 Peter 1:18 & John 1:14](#) *"We ourselves heard that voice from heaven/seen His glory"*

Thought for the Day

"There is no abiding in and enjoying his visible glory here. Whoever recognizes the transfigured Jesus, whoever recognizes Jesus as God, must also immediately recognize Him as the crucified human being, and should hear him, obey him. Luther's vision of Christ: "the crucified Lord!" ~ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

A Prayer

"O Lord most holy, as we stand with Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration of Jesus, help us to see the mysteries of faith as your adopted children, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord." **Amen.** ~ *ELCA Prayer Ventures 2014*