

Jesus Reveals!

Transfiguration of Our Lord (Yr B)

[Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 3:12-13 (14-18), 4:1-6; Mark 9:2-9]

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Rev. Frank C. Ruffatto

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Can you think of a time you had a misperception of who Jesus is? What helped you to see Him as He intends?
 2. What does the presence of Moses and Elijah say to who Jesus is (and what His mission is)?
 3. What is your perception of God using the seemingly mundane – Word and Sacrament to bring blessings to His people?
 4. Put yourself in Peter's shoes. What do you make of his reaction to the transfiguration – that is in his desire to 'set up tents' for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus?
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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and our Lord and King, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Let us pray: Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before He suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive His glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with Him and be changed into His likeness, from glory to glory; Amen.

There was a man who went to his doctor and expressed his concern: "Doc, I'm really worried. Every time I drink a cup of coffee, I feel a stabbing pain in my eye. Do you think it's serious?" To which the doctor replied, "No, try taking the spoon out of your cup."

We may not have a spoon blinding us and causing pain in our eyes, but chances are, at times, we see things from a certain perspective, a certain way that may very well prevent us from seeing things more clearly. We all form certain opinions of others, of events, of life, based on how we see them. But sometimes our perspective can be inaccurate. Sometimes it takes a significant event to help us view things differently.

"Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is the youngest signal-caller ever to win a Super Bowl. In July 2005, a reporter asked Roethlisberger why he didn't wear a helmet when riding his motorcycle.

"It's not the law," Roethlisberger said. "If it were the law, I'd definitely have one on every time I rode. But it's not the law and I know I don't have to. You're just freer when you're out there with no helmet on."

Less than a year later, Roethlisberger was involved in a serious motorcycle accident.

Surgeons spent over seven hours repairing his broken jaw, fractured skull, and several facial injuries.

Roethlisberger later apologized to the fans, his family, and his team for risking his health. 'In the past few days, I've gained a new perspective on life,' he said. 'By the grace of God, I'm fortunate to be alive.' He said if he ever rides a motorcycle again, he'll wear a helmet."¹

In today's Gospel, Peter, James, and John experienced an incredibly significant event and were all given a vision, a new point of view – a clearer way – of seeing Jesus when He was transfigured before them.

Mark describes it this way: **“And He was transfigured before them, and His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.”**² The glory of Jesus divine nature is revealed with great brilliance and meeting with Elijah and Moses showed that the testimony of the law and the prophets was pointed toward Jesus, the Son of Man who would suffer, die, and rise again to defeat sin, death, and the devil as He reconciles the world to God.

I am struck by Mark's description of the out-of-this-world, transfigured Jesus as it is echoed in the beginning of Revelation – John tells us that **“His face was like the sun shining in full strength.”**³

This transfiguration of Jesus metamorphosized these disciples' perspective of Him and they gained a new understanding. It was indeed a mountain top experience for them.

Those of you who have ever climbed to the top of a mountain or flown in an airplane know that the view 'up above' is much different than 'down below.' It is fascinating – a marvel – to look out over a mountain ridge at an infinite number of clouds below; or out of an airplane window as you admire your hometown from a different vantage point.

So too were Peter, James, and John marveled by and stunned with what they saw in the transfiguration of Jesus.

Mark goes on and gives us Peter's knee-jerk reaction to the glorious brightness of Jesus' divinity as Jesus meets with Elijah and Moses. **“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.’ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.”**⁴

“Terrified” does not quite give the picture. The word there might be better said that they were *‘out of their minds with fear.’* And so, it seems Peter was being, well, short-sighted. He did not know or rightly understand what he was seeing. Out of his mind with fear, Peter wants to prolong the glory of the moment and forgets that Jesus was focused on completing His journey to the cross.

¹ **Part 30: Sports. 765. Free to Crash.** David Slagle, “Quarterback Experiences Consequences of Freedom,” *PreachingToday.com, 1001 Illustrations that Connect*, Craig Brian Larson & Phyllis Ten Elshof, Gen. Eds., (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008)421-422

² **Mark 9:2b-3**

³ **cf. Revelation 1:16**

⁴ **Mark 9:5-6**

In Peter's defense he probably "felt as if he and his fellow disciples were very near to heaven. Though they were filled with deep awe they knew themselves to be in the presence of heavenly glory, and that Jesus was glorified so unspeakably in divine majesty."⁵

Just as the Father's voice came at the Baptism of Jesus saying, "**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,**"⁶ we have a bookend of this admonishment on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Mark tells us: "**And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.' And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.**"⁷

After the Father again instructs the disciples to listen to His 'beloved Son, it was suddenly time come down from the mountain. And just as Jesus rebuked the demons and others to keep quiet about who He is, Jesus charges the disciples "**to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.**"⁸

"The reason for thus restricting the witnesses of the transfiguration is not difficult to find. Even the disciples had wrong expectations [and misperceptions] concerning the Messiah. If the story of the transfiguration had been spread abroad, these wrong, fleshly expectations would have been fanned into flames and would have caused a great deal of harm."⁹ This side of the crucifixion and resurrection, they did not yet have the right perspective.

And so, we are given the impression that the transfiguration event is a preparation for the future; for the cross, for the resurrection, and for Jesus' final return when we will see His "**face shining like the sun.**"¹⁰

And we know that even post resurrection, it took some time for the perspective to change as the disciples on the way to Emmaus were unable to see the risen Jesus who was walking with them.

Sometimes it is not until much later in life that we come to see the purpose of the events of our lives and how they all fit together. It is then that we recognize how God works through such events to prepare us for the future.

Our mountain top experiences also prepare us for the future. When we like Jesus and His disciples face our hardships and crosses, we can draw strength from the beauty and wonder of the mountain top perspective.

⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 365.

⁶ **Matthew 3:17**

⁷ **Mark 9:7-8**

⁸ **Mark 2:9**

⁹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 368.

¹⁰ **cf. Revelation 1:6**

“Corrie ten Boom often showed a piece of embroidery to her audiences. She would hold up the piece of cloth, first showing the beauty of the embroidered side, with all the threads forming a beautiful picture, which she described as the plan God has for our lives. Then she would flip it over to show the tangled, confused underside, illustrating how we view our lives from a human standpoint.”¹¹

The beauty remains; the tangle, the confusion, the pain will pass. In the transfiguration, God assures us there is much more beyond waiting for us. He has not left us to ourselves. And although our perspective is like that jumbled mess of thread, Christ’s perspective is a vision of beauty, of mercy, and of grace for you and me – wherever we have been or whatever we have experienced.

And beloved, He reveals to us glimpses of that beauty as He has preserved His Word for us, as He drowns the misperceptions of the old Adam in us at our Baptisms, as we confess and receive absolution, even and especially as He gathers us with all the saints and gives us His very self in His Holy Supper for the tangle we make of our lives – His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Now, these things may not seem like mountain top experiences – they seem too earthly – too simple. But with Jesus as our focus and His promises as our hope, the earthly – the simple, is transformed and we begin to see the beauty of God’s picture for our lives regardless of the tangle underneath. And all of this He has given for you because “where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”¹² Talk about a beautiful perspective!

And more, beloved, unlike Peter, James, and John on that mount of transfiguration, we are not told to keep it to ourselves. The Jesus who teaches with authority, the Jesus who heals, the Jesus who forgives has been revealed.

And so, with lives transformed by His forgiveness, we get to join with Jesus and His apostles in sharing the magnificent – the gorgeous tapestry of the Gospel, as He reveals to us the delightfully simple picture of the Church’s mission: **“Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.”**¹³ Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.¹⁴

¹¹ **Point of View. 9. Both Top and Bottom.** *Illustrations Unlimited*, James S. Hewitt, Ed., (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1988) 411

¹² Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 343. [Martin Luther - *Small Catechism* VI. The Sacrament of the Altar]

¹³ **Mark 16:15**

¹⁴ **Romans 15:13**