

Date: February 19, 2023 (The Transfiguration)

1. Texts: Exodus 24:12-18; Ps. 2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9.
2. Subject: God's identity.
3. Topic: the impact of God's self-revelation.
4. Aim: educate.
5. Proposition: "When God enters our space, we are transfigured."

OUR TRANSFIGURATION

Today the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration. The readings and the collect all point in that direction. We're compelled to think about this beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured and so was revealed in majesty to four witnesses.

But, after reading the three passages one after the other, I think the theme is not the transfiguration *of* Jesus but rather the revelation *of* God through the transfiguration.

God revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. That revelation would result in the Mosaic law and ultimately to the transfiguration of Moses.

Peter's message about the transfiguration is all about the divine origins and value of prophecy. His passage is about God's self-revelation.

Then, in the Gospel reading, the life-changing impact of the event comes from God's own words. Matthew wasn't highlighting the transfiguration. His focus was God's self-revelation.

So, Moses and Jesus are transfigured, but that is through God's self-revelation. The readings compel us to think not about the glory revealed through Jesus, but rather we must think about the God who reveals himself and causes transfiguration. But where to start?

Well, God is beyond time, space and human experience. God is beyond our comprehension. He cannot be defined or adequately described. God is perfection. He is perfect in holiness, love, grace, justice, truth and righteousness.

If we were to be exposed to God with no protection, our minds would be obliterated by his perfection.

When God pushes inside time, space and human experience, we perceive his total perfection as glory. Moses perceived that glory and was transfigured, to the point that he had to wear a veil. Jesus allowed that glory to flow through him, and so his face was radiant and his clothing transformed.

But what are we going to learn from all this grand theology?

First, God is beyond us. We cannot comprehend him or box him in to our meagre understanding. If we know anything about God, it is because God has revealed himself to us.

Secondly, God does reveal himself to us. The experiences of Moses, the prophets and those four disciples on the mountain prove that. The lives of Mary and Joseph of Nazareth prove that. Scripture proves it. God is outside time, space and human experience, but he chooses to insert himself into such. God reveals himself to us.

Lastly, each one of us can be transfigured by the self-revelation of God. God may reach into our lives, and we can be transformed by his glory. The perfection that is God can breach the barriers of time, space and human experience so that we may experience his glory and be changed by it.

But what are we going to do with all this grand learning?

It seems that obedience to the will of God is the doorway to experiencing his glory. Moses did what he was commanded in going up the mountain. That obedience resulted in his experience of glory which resulted in the law. Jesus went up the mountain in imitation of Moses. That obedience resulted in his transfiguration.

Our obedience can be the doorway through which God's perfection reaches in to transfigure our lives.

But what are we going to do with this grand spiritual insight?

So, our obedience is the doorway to God's self-revelation in us. It's actually relatively easy to know what that obedience should look like. It looks like Jesus.

Jesus is the only example of perfect obedience to the will of God inside time, space and human experience. If we seek to be obedient to God, then we must allow Jesus to be expressed in and through our lives. As he was in his time and context, so we must be in ours—at least insofar as we are able.

We are to live just and righteous lives that communicate compassion and hope to those around us. Our speech and actions are to communicate the gospel of salvation to others. As God forgives us, we are to forgive others—even if they don't apologize. We don't ask, "What would Jesus do?" We just do it.

You see? It is relatively easy to know what to do. Our actions, words and thoughts are to reflect the identity of Jesus in our daily lives. It doesn't matter which charity you work with, as long as that work reflects Jesus and his gospel. It doesn't matter which investment you pour your retirement funds into, as long as that investment does ethical work in the world. Take your holiday in Arizona or in Hawaii, as long as that time empowers you to do the will of God and expresses that will in what you are doing. The circumstances of our lives provide the context for living the life of Christ in the here and now.

Such obedience opens us up to being transfigured by the glory of the perfection of God. That's really what the Feast of the Transfiguration is all about. That is its message of hope to each of us as we look for God to transfigure us.

AMEN.