

One day during a time of prayer on a mountain with three of His disciples Jesus' appearance changed. His clothing and His face were filled with light like lightening. And the disciples saw Him talking with two Old Testament saints long since dead. Ever since that day this event has been called the Transfiguration. That's what we're going to talk about this morning and how it might affect our walk with God and one another.

PRAYER

READ Luke 9:28-36: Now about eight days after these sayings He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and went up on the mountain to pray.²⁹ And as He was praying, the appearance of His face was altered, and His clothing became dazzling white.³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with Him, Moses and Elijah,³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.³² Now Peter and those who were with Him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.³³ As the men were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah," not knowing what he said.³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

The Scripture reads, "Now about eight days after these sayings (Jesus) took with Him Peter, James, and John, and went up on the mountain to pray." (T)hese sayings" were what Jesus had told the disciples earlier. What Jesus had said was that His true disciples deny themselves and take up their crosses daily, that if they try to save their lives they will lose them, "but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (9:24).

That was difficult to hear. After all, no one wants to hear from their teacher that if you do what he's telling you to do, things are going to get a lot worse before they get better! But that was exactly what Jesus did. So He took the disciples up to a mountain to pray about it.

The Scripture reads that Peter, James, and John “**went up to the mountain to pray,**” however, they “**were heavy with sleep.**” As tempting as it is, this story is not about how to pray, as in one must take safeguards to prevent himself from falling asleep!

The reason we’re told that the disciples had fallen asleep is because the author wanted to point out that when Jesus revealed His glory “**they became fully awake.**” In other words, the transfiguration of Jesus’ appearance was not a mass-hallucination or dream. For everyone was wide awake and saw it with their own eyes.

The Scripture reads that “**the appearance of (Jesus’) face was altered.**” More literally, the passage reads that His appearance was changed into another form. In English translations of the Bible we read that Jesus’ clothes were “**dazzling white**” or “**white and glistening.**” But in the Greek we read that “**His clothing was flashing lightening**”! The point is that what the disciples saw was the glory of God in their midst, which is not to be confused with a nicely washed white robe!

For the disciples Jesus was no longer ordinary an ordinary man. He was still a man, yes, but He was also God, God in the flesh. That’s what the disciples realized. The Lord often used light to illustrate His nature, and what He does, and to distinguish Himself from the world and everything contrary to His will. Here, at this one moment in His ministry on earth Jesus let His divine light shine in its fullness.

We read that Jesus was talking to Moses and Elijah, the two kingpins among Israel’s prophets who, incidentally, did not die ordinary deaths. Elijah was carried into heaven on chariots of fire, and Moses died after viewing the Promised Land from Mt. Nebo in Jordan, and God Himself buried him. These men were very special to the Lord.

Moses and Elijah were discussing with Jesus “**His departure.**” What were they talking about? Were they encouraging him? Were they discussing the strategy of His death? We don’t know. What’s important, however, is that these two prophets connected the ministry of Jesus with the “old time religion,” which is to say, the Old Testament characters gave validity to the work of the promised Messiah. It was no accident they were there for Peter, James, and John to see.

As all of this was happening Peter immediately wanted to build a memorial to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Moses & Elijah were already heroes of Israel, and his friend Jesus was certainly going to take his rightful place alongside of them.

But "**a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid....**" With the cloud the disciples must've recalled the stories they knew from the Old Testament, about how God had appeared at other times in a cloud.

For example, during the Exodus God led Israel across the desert with a pillar of cloud, providing assurance of His presence and giving the nation direction on its path. In another instance God covered Mt. Sinai with a cloud so that the people knew He was with them.

From the cloud God said, "**This is My Son, My Chosen One. Listen to Him!**" Notice that the Lord did NOT say, ""This is My Son, My Chosen One; BUILD ONLY ONE SHRINE!" But He said, "**Listen to Him!**"

"And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone."

I want to make two points. First, Jesus doesn't share His glory with anyone, not even the Old Testament prophets, not even Moses and Elijah, not to mention the dignitaries of other religions such as Krishna, Muhammad, and Buddha.

Second, Jesus doesn't need shrines. Rather, God wants us to listen to what Jesus has to say.

Remember? What Jesus had said to the disciples before His Transfiguration was that they must pick up their crosses and follow Him.

The disciples had no idea what that meant at the time Jesus said it, but they figured it out soon enough as they watched their teacher, friend, lord, and savior bear His Cross and die for their sins.

In three days we begin our march to the Cross on Calvary. We begin with Ash Wednesday and it all ends with Good Friday and the Crucifixion of our Lord and Easter Sunday and His Resurrection. During this time let us meditate on what it means to bear our crosses just as Jesus said we would.

Indeed, each one of us will bear a cross. However, no two crosses are the same. Sometimes they are physical in nature, but at other times they are relational and emotional. However, all crosses have the following characteristics. I base my observations on Jesus' experience when He bore His Cross.

A cross we bear in Jesus' name will always be something that involves a struggle for us. Jesus struggled. We struggle. Our cross will be something we don't want to do, something we want relief from. **It's a struggle, nonetheless we can do it with God's help.**

Secondly, our cross will be something we accept for the sake of someone else's well-being, even their salvation. And we bear that cross in love. Jesus loves us and He saved us with His Cross, so too we will be a part of someone else's salvation through our love and cross. **Remember, your cross is for someone else's sake, even their salvation, and we bear that cross in love.**

Third, our cross will be something which we do intentionally. God will not impose on you a cross. But just as Jesus intentionally made His way to Jerusalem that He might be condemned, flogged, and crucified, so too we consciously choose our crosses and entrust ourselves to God to walk with us as we bear it. **So your cross is something you choose to do in faith.**

Friends in Christ, this week let us listen to Jesus. That means let us read and meditate on His words in the Holy Bible. That means let us give thanks for His words of comfort, hope, and salvation which we have received in the waters of Holy Baptism. That means let us receive His promised word of forgiveness in the absolution we receive in worship. And that means let us receive His word of promise in His body and blood in Holy Communion.

This week let us consider the cross the Lord has laid before us. It's there, it's just a matter of recognizing it and making a decision to bear it. Again, here are the three characteristics of your cross:

- **It's a struggle, but you can do it with God's help.**
- **It's for someone else's sake and you bear it in love.**
- **It's something you choose to do in faith.**

And, finally, brothers and sisters in the Lord, this week may you have an opportunity to share the love of God in Christ Jesus with another person who really needs to receive it, in the name of God. Amen.