

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 what it has to do with 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 if one were truly to follow him, they would 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 must've been difficult to hear. After all, no one wants to hear that things are going to get worse before they get better! But that was exactly what Jesus was saying. So he took his disciples up to the mountain to pray about it.

The Scripture reads that the disciples "**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 **“they became fully awake they saw (Christ’s) glory.”** 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 transformed. 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, a theophany, which is not to be confused with a nicely washed white robe!

For the disciples Jesus was no longer simply a man. He was still a man, yes, but he was also God, God in the flesh. That’s what the disciples realized, for 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 talked 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 then God himself buried him. These men were very special to the Lord.

We read that Moses and Elijah were discussing with Jesus **“his departure.”** What does that mean? 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” of the Jews, which is to say, they gave validity to the work of Jesus as the promised Messiah. It was no accident Peter, James, and John were there to witness the event.

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

But we read that "**a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid....**" 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. 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 Son, my Chosen One; BUILD ONLY ONE SHRINE!" But he said, "**Listen to him!**"

And then the account ends with, "**And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.**"

Two points: First, Jesus doesn't share his glory with anyone, not even Moses and Elijah, not to mention 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? He said they must pick up their crosses and follow him.

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

So what does it mean for you and me to bear a cross in the name of Christ. First, have you ever heard someone say, "A bad hair day is certainly a cross we all have to bear!" or something like that? My friends, a bad hair day is not a cross!

Rather, a cross is something we bear for the sake of someone else's well-being, like Jesus. It is a suffering we bear in love for the sake of another person's salvation.

Jesus loves us and he saved us by his Cross, and so we too may be a part of another person's redemption, their salvation through our love and suffering.

And like Jesus our cross is something we embrace 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 for the sake of humanity, so too we consciously choose our crosses and entrust ourselves to God. We bear our crosses with faith.

Friends in Christ, this week let's listen to Jesus, reading and meditating on his words in the Holy Bible. Let us give thanks for his words of comfort, hope, and salvation which we have received in the waters of Baptism. Let us receive His word of forgiveness in the absolution. Let us receive his call on our lives with faith.

This week let's 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 for the sake of the people whom the Lord has brought into our lives.

And this week let's take the opportunity to share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.