

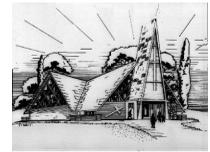


Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon for Transfiguration Sunday 2016

The LORD's Transfiguration for you!

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Lk 9, 28–36:

- **ESV 28** Now about eight days after these sayings He took with Him Peter and John and James 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** And 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. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.
- **Vote:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and let us realise who Jesus truly is, what He has taken on Himself for us and how all of His doing saves us and gives us a certain future! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• We are still in the season of Epiphany, Jesus' Epiphany. Last Sunday we realised how Jesus was revealed and sealed as the anointed Saviour of Israel and of the whole world! Jesus' Baptism was a physical, objective sign of a highly significant spiritual event! Even the Holy Spirit came down in a physical, visible form! This was not something happening in the heart of John or of Israel, something in an altered state of mind or a vision. One could see and describe it. It was happening before

the eyes of John and Israel! The Holy Spirit remained on Jesus and in Him (Mark 3). He was filled with the Spirit of God.

• And a real voice came from the cloud in heaven saying [3,22]: *“You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased!”* With the incarnation of Jesus it was not only the second person of the Trinity visiting Israel: God the Holy Spirit and God the Father visited humankind in Christ. Exactly that, what every atheist and sceptic of all times were looking for and still are looking for, namely that God would really show up, well, it did happen! When the time was fulfilled, when it was ripe, it did happen. This is what we have in the Scriptures. The revelation of Jesus had to be so physical otherwise not even John the Baptist would have been able to point to Jesus! In fact, we have seen this, during the Christmas season, that heaven and earth, angels and nature, the stars, had to point to Jesus, at His birth, to get the message of God across, that the King of kings was born!

• And today we have a report before us of another encounter with the glorious nature of Jesus! This time it was Jesus Himself who changed. His face changed and His garment became dazzling white like lightning. Jesus’ Body, the very same Body that was born and lying in the manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, this same Body radiated Glory, radiated intense white light! And again, this was not a vision of Peter, John and James, who were with Jesus on the mountain. Yes, they were drowsy whilst Jesus was praying, just like in Gethsemane - I am sure you know of this drowsiness during prayer ... - but then they became fully awake and they saw the radiating face and clothes of Jesus!

• So, for a moment, the Glory that truly belongs to Jesus, was radiating from His face and clothes! That was not all they saw. They also saw two men who stood with Him! Moses and Elijah who were also appearing in glory. And what were they doing? They were having a conversation about Jesus’ Exodus that He was about to fulfil in Jerusalem! The OT prophets in conversation with Jesus about His ministry and its fulfilment, His Resurrection and Ascension.

• So, what does this want to reveal to us, namely that Moses and Elijah appeared in conversation with Jesus? Verse 27, the verse before our passage gives the answer.

Jesus said the following to His disciples: *“But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”*

- Peter, John and James had seen the Kingdom of God that day on the mountain top!
- Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? Well here we receive a glimpse! The people are real with their bodies, yet in a glorious state. That is, no sin in sight. What they are saying is pure truth. There is nothing corruptible in Jesus, not even the slightest bit of a so-called white lie- what is a white-lie in any case, it is sin, worthy of death. Nothing of that kind. Jesus had no speck or blemish, and the same goes for Elijah and Moses. They also appeared in glory, that is, with their perfect bodies and sinless state!
- There are so many books written on Near Death Experiences (NDA’s) which describe what they might have seen, while dead. Well, they are at best all speculations. Here we have a true revelation provided by none other than the Truth in person Himself. He cannot lie, and we have proof that He did not speak a single lie! None of His enemies could find anything against Him, later on during the trials.
- And so what these people in the kingdom of God are speaking about becomes very interesting. What are they speaking about in heaven? Jesus’ Exodus! The OT prophets in conversation with Jesus, and some of the future NT writers were listening, Peter, John and James. They would later on write down what they had seen, as they remembered it, with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- And isn’t this exactly what happens in the Divine Liturgy of the Church: OT and NT Words of God in conversation with one another over Jesus’ Exodus! Take a good look at our liturgical pieces: we are speaking and singing Scripture to one another. When we enter the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Service, we are immersed in the Words of God. That is why careful hymn-selection is necessary. The hymns need to be according to the Word of God. We cannot simply, just for the sake of a good melody, sing a verse that is contrary to the conversation we have here between OT and NT scriptures.

- At the centre is Jesus and His ministry for us. None other than God the Father Himself confirmed that with His own voice that day: "*This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!*" This is God's Chosen One. Therefore we listen to Him!
- Just as the disciples needed to hear this confirmation of God, God's interpretation of the whole revelation, we also need to hear it. We need to stick to God's interpretation so that we don't fall into the same trap as Peter did, when he started gobbling his own speculation of what had happened. They were not in the state of glory yet, although they had seen this with their own eyes. Seeing an Epiphany of God does not automatically qualify one to always speak the truth. No. Even the disciples spoke a lot of gibberish at times, like Peter in this case. Disciples and preachers of the Word of God always need to be checked and tested against the written Word of God.
- But, there is genuine solid hope for all members of Christ. Jesus' Exodus happened exactly as prophesied. It benefits us. He has done it for your and my sakes, so that united with Him, through His Word and Sacraments, we are white as snow in the eyes of God. In the eyes of God you shine like Elijah and Moses, when you walk out of here, because Jesus' means of Grace are effective! The evil spiral of sin is broken by His gifts! His own blood, His own eternal, precious, glorious Life was shed so that you may have Life as a wonderful gift- clean, pure Life, without a blemish! That is what you receive here. That is what happens here.
- Here we experience the conversation of heaven. We listen in, on how OT Prophets and NT Apostles have a conversation with Jesus. We hear and receive what they say and give. And we are even allowed to carefully join in, with our confession of sins, with our prayers and praises, in the liturgy. This is what true fellowship with God is all about. It happens here, right here, not before our eyes, but in faith, in our hearing. In faith we may see what our eyes cannot yet see because we trust Jesus! He cannot lie! He is pure. He is authentic. He is genuine. He is clean. What He says is absolutely flawless and true. Praise be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! **Amen.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.