

Title Transfiguration Sunday
Mark 9:2-9

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. On a lonely mountaintop Peter and the disciples were confronted by the glorified Body of Christ. Right before them Jesus was transfigured, changed from his earthly body to be revealed in his glorified heavenly body. In fact, the word “changed” falls short of what really happened. It falls short because it implies that something new has appeared, that the old form disappeared and was replaced by the new. It implies that during the Transfiguration, for a short period of time, Jesus - the man, was replaced by Jesus - God. But that’s not at all what happened. The word “Transfigured” means something far more. There on the mountain top... Jesus - man and Jesus - God, were simultaneously there... had always been simultaneously there. Not only that, but since his birth, Jesus the man, and Jesus, God, have always there, side by side, within each other, abiding in each other.

Jesus has always had the glory of God, though it was hidden from sinful Mankind. At the Transfiguration, that which was hidden, was miraculously revealed, to those who were humanly blind to it. It was as if a curtain, which had separated the holy from the unholy, the glorious from the mundane the heavenly from the earthly, had been miraculously pulled back so that human eyes could see The Divine. Do you remember the Claritin commercial showing how it could improve your sight? You think that you are watching a normal scene of nature, then suddenly they pull away a translucent layer and the image gets clearer. Or like when I got glasses for the first time. I never thought my eyesight was blurry. But after I got my new glasses and started driving, I remember the sensation of actually being able to see the edges of cars as I drove around. Up until then I was unaware that the world was out of focus. This is what the transfiguration of Jesus was like. This is how it is with the divine. There is a curtain before our human eyes, separating us from seeing the divine. The world does not realize that it cannot see the divine. It is literally blind to it. Yet through faith, God has ripped that veil away. Through the eyes of faith, we now see clearly. At the Transfiguration, Jesus the man, didn’t BECOME Jesus God. Rather, the veil which did not allow the disciples to see the glory of God, with their human eyes, was temporarily ripped away.

And then what happened? When they saw the glory of God in Jesus, when they witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter and the other disciples, were forced to come to grips with the divinity of Christ. Jesus was not just their friend, but their Lord, not just their traveling buddy, but God himself. Because of this confrontation Peter and the other disciples had to come to grips with the question “Who was Jesus Christ really?” In fact, our Gospel lesson about the transfiguration, is part of a series of encounters with Christ which asks the question, “Who is Jesus Christ? It was barely a week ago that Jesus asked the disciples that very question. “Who do the people say that I am?” The disciples say “Oh,” some people think you are “John the Baptist, some say Elijah” Then Jesus confronts

his disciples directly and demands to know - "Who do YOU say that I am?" It is here scripture records Peter's confession. Peter, without fear of wrong answers rises and boldly speaks "You are the Christ! And Jesus says "Blessed are you." "For you did not come to know that from men, but from God." In answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ," Peter tells us Jesus was the chosen one of God. For Peter, the veil which blinded human eyes, was pierced by the eyes of faith.

But the story doesn't stop there. As recorded in today's Gospel lesson... God comes directly to Peter and some of the disciples Peter and the disciples had what we call a mountain-top experience. In the ancient world, people believed that mountains were special places, places where heaven and earth intersected. The ancient Hebrews believed that mountains were places where godly people encountered God. Mountain-top experiences are special. On a lonely mountain top, Peter was allowed to see the transfigured form of Jesus in His glory. From Mark 9:2

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

On a lonely mountain top, for one short evening the curtain separating the divine and the human, was stripped away, and the disciples are allowed to see Jesus in His glory. Not only that but on a lonely mountain top, God himself directly answers the question, "who is Jesus Christ?" Verse 7

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

God confesses, not through a person but directly, in a voice from heaven that Jesus is the anointed one. that Jesus is God's son. In answer to the question that Jesus asked just the week before, "Who do you say I am?" God openly answers that "Jesus was not John the Baptist nor Elijah. Jesus was not just a good teacher nor just a good man nor even one of his creations at all But God openly says Jesus was his one and only son. that He was God. How awe inspiring it must have been to see the Son of God in His glory... to hear the words of God almighty, "This is my son, whom I have chosen." "Listen to him!"

I think to myself, how cool that must have been. Could you imagine hearing a voice from heaven, the voice of God, telling you "believe in my son, Jesus" I think to myself, how much easier it would be to have faith if I had only had a similar mountain top experience. How much more power my Christian message would have if I had had such a mountain top experience if I had seen Christ in His glory. With such concrete evidence as this, concrete evidence of the work of God, I could surely wipe out all doubt in the world.

The good news is that each one of us has already experienced the power of God within our lives, each one of us has seen Christ in his glory. In what way have we **ALREADY** experienced the concrete work of God in our lives? In what way have **WE** beheld Christ in his glory?

First, in order for us to truly identify the glory of Christ that **WE** have beheld, we must remember what is natural for us... what is what is natural for this world. Scripture tells us that we are by nature, sinful,... that we are by nature enemies of God. What this means is that by our sinful human nature we have no desire to please God. Yet because Jesus died on the cross, we are freed from our sinful nature. We are no longer slaves to that sinful nature. The Holy Spirit has been sent to us to heal our sinful nature. We are new creations.

So how can you tell that you are a new creation? How do you know. Well, one way is personal. Do you struggle with sin? I'm not saying do you sin or not... Do you struggle with sin? Do you fight against it? Or do you enjoy it and just don't care what God thinks? You see, the unbeliever, just doesn't care. The unbeliever doesn't fight against their sinful nature. The unbeliever simply accepts it. In fact, the unbeliever enjoys sinning. So I ask... "Do you fight against sin?" I don't mean... "Do you **WIN** your fights against sin?" Just... "Do you actually fight against your sinful nature?" Cuz, if you do if you find any desire to do God's will, though it conflicts with your own human desires, if you desire to do God's will, despite the cost to yourself, then you can know that the source of that struggle is the Holy Spirit working within you. You struggle with sin, only because God has planted in you a new person, a new man, capable of doing things pleasing to God. It is that new person who struggles with your sin. We are new creations who hate the old sinful self. As we experience this we can directly attest to the changing work of God within our lives. God has made us new creations. In this personal way we have beheld the glory of the Spirit of Christ in and through us.

But there's more! We have experienced the presence of God in a concrete way. Today we will experience the very presence of the glorified Jesus at our Communion table. Though Moses or Elijah in their Heavenly bodies won't not be there. We will not visibly see the wine or bread supernaturally transform themselves into blood and the body of Jesus Christ. Yet Scripture tells us that in some divine manner, Christ's body and blood **ARE** given to us, that in some divine manner the forgiveness of sins **IS** offered, and the reconciliation with God, our maker, has occurred. For a short period of time, the curtain between the divine and the human will be stripped away. When we partake of the Lord's supper we are confronted by Jesus in His glory, exercising his divine authority to offer the forgiveness of sins to us. The Lord's Supper becomes an objective experience of God's work in us. Because the Lord's Supper was instituted by God alone its validity stands upon His word alone. It is a source of God's power that simply requires that you believe the words "given for you for the forgiveness of sins"... It is a mystery of God, a mystery which we will

never fully understand this side of death. Yet we believe. We believe because God said so.

Today we celebrate the Transfiguration where the veil separating the human and the divine was ripped away, where Peter and the disciples were confronted by Christ - God in His glory. Today, at the Lord's table, again the veil separating the human and the divine will be ripped away and we will be confronted by Christ God, in His glory. As the disciples heard God say This is my Son, whom I love... because of Jesus, the same words come to us... because of Jesus, we are God's child whom he loves. Praise be to God.