

Theme: What the Transfiguration Reveals About Jesus

Mark 9:2-10

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" -- 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. 7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

In the Bible there are very few "proofs" for Jesus being true God that are as obvious and rock solid as His Transfiguration. In fact, I would say that aside from His resurrection from the dead, the transfiguration of Jesus was the definitive *Epiphany*—the ultimate "revealing" of the fact that He is true God:

- † In this incident we have the visible proof that Jesus is true God as He claimed to be: Our text says, "**He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them**" (v. 2-3). Matthew's account of Jesus' Transfiguration tells us that also, "**His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light**" (**Matthew 17:2**).
- † In Jesus' Transfiguration we also have the audible proof that Jesus is true God as He claimed to be: We see and hear the approval of Jesus given God the Father Himself, **And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"** (v. 7).

Without a doubt Jesus showed Himself to be true God by His Transfiguration. That much is obvious from our text. However, if we dig a little deeper, we will also discover in our text that the Transfiguration reveals quite a bit more about who Jesus, the Son of God—true God Himself—really is! So, today we will be looking at What the Transfiguration Reveals about Jesus.

Mark makes a very interesting comparison in our text when he writes about the brightness of Jesus' clothes. He says that they "**became shining, exceedingly white, like snow**" (v. 3). Now those of you who have lived or spent some time up in the upper Midwest of our country, or maybe if you've been up in the mountains skiing, you know that at this time of the year there is a very good chance you are going to see some examples of just what Mark is talking about here. I can remember on one particular day in early March we were driving through central Wisconsin and the farm fields were covered with a fresh blanket of perfectly white snow. The sun was shining and reflecting so brightly off the snow that it made you squint. It was so beautiful—like something out of a painting—but the bright whiteness was so blinding it almost hurt to look out the window. I imagine that it was a similar type of glorious, blinding whiteness when these three disciples looked at Jesus.

Well, for those of you who have ever spent a considerable amount of time in the wintry Midwest you know that even though we'd like to think that winter days are all picture-perfect bright sunny days with fresh, pure white blankets of snow, unfortunately, that's not the reality. Especially around this time of year the reality is that snow melts, it gets packed down and walked on and driven over and soon you inevitably have an icy, slushy, dirty brown mess everywhere. Many people love to experience the glorious beauty that winter snowfalls bring, but very few people want to deal with the hassles, the icy wet slush, and slippery, even dangerous conditions that winter snows also bring.

The same can be said of many Christians—perhaps even us—when we think about Jesus. We love reading and thinking about accounts like His Transfiguration because we love to think of Jesus' glorious brightness and power as true God. We are more than willing to worship, follow, and stay close to a Savior like that. Much like Peter in our text we want to “pitch a tent” and just stay forever in one of those glorious moments with Jesus. However, that type of thinking reveals a lack of understanding about who Jesus really is, and consequently also about what it means to be one of Jesus’ disciples. Remember, our text tells us that when Peter said he wanted to pitch three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah and stay up there on the mountain “**he didn’t know what to say**” (v. 6). Luke, in his account of this incident says plainly, “**He did not know what he was saying**” (Luke 9:33 NIV).

What Peter and the rest of the disciples hadn’t quite fully understood yet was that there was, humanly speaking, a very “un-glorious”—we might even say “ugly”—but essentially important side to Jesus’ work as the Son of God:

- † The humiliation of coming to earth as a lowly servant;
- † The hatred and persecution of unbelievers, even the very religious leaders of His people, the Jews; and
- † The shameful suffering and horrifying death by crucifixion He would suffer at the hands of the Romans.

These weren’t things Jesus’ disciples had yet understood about Him and His true role and true mission as the Messiah, the Anointed Savior of the world. In the previous chapter of Mark we read that Jesus was trying to explain the necessity of His sacrifice to His disciples, “**And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly.** (Mark 8:31-32a)

And what was Peter’s reaction? “**And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He [Jesus] had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’**” (Mark 8:32b-33).

In the last verses of our text for today we also see that the disciples still were having a hard time with this concept, “**Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant**” (v. 9-10).

To Peter and the disciples the thought of a suffering, dying Jesus—the Christ!—was absolutely unimaginable! They couldn’t understand that the long awaited Messiah of their people would have to be brutally and shamefully put to death, much less need to rise from the dead!

Jesus, however, knew that this was what He had come to do. In fact, His upcoming suffering and death was what He was discussing with Moses and Elijah (v. 4). Luke tells us in his account that they, “**spoke of His departure (“decease” – NKJV) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem**” (Luke 9:31). No doubt these were words of encouragement and even anticipation from Moses and Elijah. Jesus knew that He had to do this. Remember, He told His disciples, “**the Son of Man must suffer many things**” (Mark 8:31). Jesus knew that this “un-glorious,” “ugly” aspect of being the Son of God was just as important and necessary as the glorious brightness and almighty power that was His.

In fact, this “ugly” side of His work, His humiliation and suffering for the sins of all people, was in a sense even *more* glorious than His radiant revealing of His Godhead here at the Transfiguration! After all, His suffering and sacrifice of His life for our sins earned mankind the eternal, unending glorious brightness of heaven itself—a place free from sin, a place that has no “ugly” side!

As human beings we are often much like the disciples, even though we have the complete story of Jesus’ work of salvation recorded for us—His suffering, dying, and rising again. By nature we want all the brightness and glory, but none of the suffering. However, in the verses just before our sermon text in Mark

Jesus explained to His disciples, and us, very clearly that this simply will not be the case—not for Him and not for His followers here on earth, “**When He [Jesus] had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels’”** (Mark 8:34-38).

As we enter this Wednesday (Ash Wednesday) into another season of Lent, do we sort of “dread” getting back into the “ugly” side of Jesus’ life here on earth? As a pastor I can tell you that it often takes more “emotional energy” to gear up for Lent because of the serious and somber nature of its content, as opposed to say the cheerful anticipation of Jesus’ birth that we experience during a season like Advent.

Maybe we would we rather stay on the mountain of His transfiguration and bask in His glorious brightness as true God? What we need to realize and remember then, is that the glory and the humiliation are all a part of who Jesus is—Son of God and Son of Man. We also need to remember that Jesus may have shown Himself to be true God by the glorious brightness of His Transfiguration, but He showed His true *glory*—the glory of His immeasurable love—by His cross!

Jesus wasn’t ashamed to take upon His back His cross—our guilt, our sins, our punishment of death in hell—in order to give us heaven. Are we ashamed of His cross, the “ugly” side of Jesus? If we are, then we are probably going to be “ashamed” to “**take up our cross and follow Him**” (Mark 8:34) through the “ugly” parts of our Christian lives

- † The persecution from others,
- † The temptations of life,
- † The difficulties that come from living in a sin-tainted world, and
- † The struggle with our own sinful flesh.

Remember, however, that Jesus said, “**For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels**” (Mark 8:34-38). That is an “ugly” thought!

During this upcoming Lenten season let this image of Jesus’ glorious brightness at His Transfiguration burn into our minds and hearts. Draw encouragement and strength from it as we again go through the “dark” and “ugly” days of His suffering and death. Remember, What the Transfiguration Reveals about Jesus is first and foremost that He really and truly is True God! And this glimpse of His glory also gives us a “glimpse” of the glories of heaven that await us when this life is over.

Let that be the “light at the end of the tunnel” of this often dark and difficult life. When we “come down from the mountain” of Jesus glorious Transfiguration today and get on with our everyday lives let us remember the true glory of Jesus—His cross!

- † Those wounds and stripes He took for us bring us healing;
- † The shame of that “ugly” chunk of wood He hung upon won us the beauty and brightness of heaven.
- † That cross shows the true glory of Christ’s love.
- † That cross gives us true joy—the joy of forgiveness and salvation!

Yes, in the brightness of His Transfiguration we see the glory of Jesus’ Godhead; but in the “ugliness” of His cross we truly see our “Beautiful Savior!” Amen.