

Transfiguration Sunday **February 14, 2021**

(If you are home read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud. If you are worshipping in person, please follow along silently.)

Prepare for worship: Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

Call to Worship:

Holy Ground

We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around;
let us praise Jesus now; we are standing in his presence on holy ground.
From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2272.

Centering Words:

The light of God is shining. The word of God is speaking. The love of God is with us. May we look within and listen for the presence of God in our midst.

Prayer of the Day:

Holy and awesome God, we stand in your presence filled with regret for our many sins and failings. Though there is greatness in us, and a deep longing for goodness, we have often denied our better selves and refused to hear your voice calling us to rise to the full height of our humanity. For there is weakness in us, as well as strength. At times we choose to walk in darkness, our vision obscured. We do not care to look within, and we are unwilling to look beyond at those who need our help. O God, we are too weak to walk unaided. Be with us a strong and wise friend, and teach us to walk by the light of your truth. We pray in the name of the One who taught us to pray:

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House, 478.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Old Testament Reading 2 Kings 2: 1-12

Psalm 50:1-6

New Testament Reading 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

Special Music

Gospel Reading Mark 9: 2-9

Sermon *Being Fully Human*

Hymn:

We've a Story to Tell to the Nations

1. O wondrous sight! O vision fair
of glory that the church shall share,
which Christ upon the mountain shows,
where brighter than the sun he glows!
2. From age to age the tale declares
how with the three disciples there
where Moses and Elijah meet,
the Lord holds converse high and sweet.
3. The law and prophets there have place,
two chosen witnesses of grace;
the Father's voice from out the cloud
proclaims his only Son aloud.
4. With shining face and bright array,
Christ deigns to manifest that day
what glory shall be theirs above
who joy in God with perfect love.
5. And faithful hearts are raised on high
by this great vision's mystery;
for which in joyful strains we raise
the voice of prayer, the hymn of praise.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, 258.

Benediction:

May the brightness of God light our way. May the brightness of Christ shine within us. May the brightness of God's Spirit flow through us. Amen.

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Response:

God Be with You till We Meet Again
God be with you till we meet again;
by his counsels guide, uphold you,
with his sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 673.

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Assistant: *K. C. Warble*
Choir Director: *Christopher A. McCroskey*
Church Musician

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...”

Pam Hook Oren Edwards Patsy Shuler John Ballentine Steve Aiello
Jimmy Grahl Steve White Esther Carter Latson Lewis George Taylor

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

Family and Friends: *Robert Bradley (Business Associate of Simon Ross); Mildred Hart (mother of Dee Senn); Dave Burrell (Business Associate of Tommy Gleaton); Gene Odom (grandfather of Mark Branham); Gary Becton (friend of Mark Branham); Audrey Cassidy (sister-in-law of Mary Louise Robinson); Jerry Fowler (friend of Chris Derrick); Donna Walker (coworker of Jack Stevens); Gil Merrick (friend of Laurie Knapp); Kelly Knapp (wife of Laurie Knapp’s nephew); Paul Kidney (son-in-law of Charles & Jackie McNeill); Ruby Pennington (friend of Laurie Knapp); Sara Krisnow (niece of Marty Johnson); Rick Baldwin (nephew of Tommy Johnson); Judy Bauer (cousin of Marty Johnson); Iris Turlington (aunt of John Zeigler); Billy & Betty Jean Newton (brother and sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff); Jimmy Brooks (Brother-in-law of Boots Morgan); Tonya Spires (friend of the Derricks); Vivian Almendinger (great-niece of Christopher McCroskey); J. B. & Stephanie Martindale (cousins of Christopher McCroskey); Linda Hargett (stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); Ollie Shelly (friend of the Derricks); Brenlee Carnes; Danielle Spotts (co-worker of Kathy White); Vickie Edwards (neighbor of Kathy White); Greg Ammer, George Duke, Debbie Ranck, Vicki Beatty, Connie Mason, Brenda Grier (friends of Lynn Martin); Diane Kelsey, Erma Ruff, David Price & Family, Mark Leonhart, Ty Moore, Julie Stroud, Fran Huck, George Dorn (friends of Kay Jordan); Teddy Derrick (uncle of Arvan Derrick); Haidee Baehr (friends of Ruth Frady); Dianne Schmotzer (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); Dan Connor, Denise Paul (cousin of Gale Frady); Billy Johnson. Max Johnson (friends of Gale Frady); Ray Culbreth’s Group House; Nellie Gantt (mother of friend of Ray Culbreth); Amelia Zinski (great-niece of Linda Maloch); Wayne Blair (son of Dot Johnson); Xavier Crane (grandnephew of John Ballentine); Janet Beck (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); Vera Von Glahn (sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting); Michael Carter (son of Esther Carter); Adam Lavender (son of Phil Lavender)*

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 02/07 Worship: 18

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 02/07 \$ 8,365.00 Souper Bowl: \$ 157.68

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS.”



Ministers
Pastor
Resident Bishop
District Superintendent

The Congregation
John D. Jordan
Jonathan Holston
Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform



Transfiguration
SUNDAY

1201 Mohawk Drive
West Columbia, SC 29169
Telephone: 803.794.7777

E-mail: trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com

Website: www.trinityumcwc.org

This story of the transfiguration of Jesus is quite familiar. We hear it every year on this Sunday before the beginning of Lent. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him up a mountain where Jesus is transfigured. His clothes become dazzling white. Moses and Elijah chat with him a bit. The Voice of God identifies Jesus as the Son and we are to listen to him. It is so familiar and you have heard so many sermons on it that you might well say to yourself, “I can just catch a fifteen- minute nap.”

Before you doze off, let me pique your curiosity by presenting this question. What was Jesus transfigured into? The word that is translated as transfigured is only used here and in Matthew’s story of the transfiguration in the Gospels. It is only used one other time in the New Testament, and that is in Paul’s letter to the Romans. In all three cases the meaning is that of being changed into something else.

The fact that the word was only used two times in the Gospels may indicate that what Peter, James and John experienced on that mountain was indescribable. They really didn’t have words to describe what they experienced when they talked about it after the resurrection. Transfigured or transformed (depending on the translation) may have been the best word they could come up with. They just knew that they saw Jesus in a different form, different from what they had seen in their everyday experience with Jesus.

What was this different form? Our tendency is to think that Peter, James, and John saw the divine nature of Jesus. That would seem to be indicated by the radiant whiteness of his clothes. Thus, Peter, James, and John were receiving a vision of what it would be like in the afterlife. However, there may be something else.

Jesus is seen with Moses and Elijah, the two prophets who did not die according to Jewish tradition. We read of Elijah being taken up in our reading from 2 Kings and Deuteronomy 34 has been interpreted to indicate that Moses did not really die but was also taken up by God. This would seem to indicate that Jesus was to defeat death. Just prior to the transfiguration, Jesus made his first prediction of his death and resurrection. So, the transfiguration is a confirmation that Jesus will conquer death. But there may be more.

Peter, James, and John knew Jesus in his human form, or so they thought. What Jesus may have been transfigured into for them to experience was the image of God in Jesus. What they experience may not have been the divinity of Jesus but the fully human Jesus. Jesus, the human, created in the image of God as God intended. They saw Jesus transfigured into the fully human being created in the image of God. They saw Jesus for what he was, the image of God, They saw humanity, them, as God created.

As humanity was corrupted and fell by its disobedience to the will of God, the image of God in humanity was also corrupted. Humanity no longer reflected the image of God. Humanity was no longer fully human. God then had to renew his image in mankind. According to St Athanasius, who wrote around 318CE, “[God]

assumed a human body, in order that in it, death might once for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.”¹ God became human in Jesus so that humanity may be restored into the image of God.

When God says, “Listen to him” he is telling Peter, James, and John that Jesus will reveal to them how to be fully human. Jesus, as a human, will reveal to them the image of God in which humanity was created.

Through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection the means by which humans could become fully human was accomplished. Humans could be removed from the corruption of sin and restored into the image of God. Humans could reflect the image of God and share in the divine life. This is not something humans could do on their own but only by God’s transforming grace.

Through God’s transforming grace we are transformed to become fully human, restored in the image of God. This grace of God is freely given to all, to everyone without merit. God’s grace is not just poured out upon us once and that is it; God’s grace is poured out upon us continually.

When I was the pastor at Mt. Pleasant, we did a weekly devotional service and quarterly communion at two Residential Care Facilities near the church. Most of the residents suffered from mental illness. After one communion service, as I was packing up the elements, one of the residents came up to me and asked if he could have more “church juice.” I could not help but think we can ask for more of God’s grace, more “church juice”, but we do not. How often are we satisfied with just a little grace, just enough to save us from sin, but not enough to make us fully human. How often are we satisfied with a little cup when God wants to give us a whole gallon and more!

As God’s grace is freely given, it must be freely received. God, being a God of love, does not force or coerce us to receive this transforming grace. Force and coercion are not characteristic of our loving God. Love does not force or coerce. Love gives freely and is received freely. We are free to reject or limit God’s grace.

If we reject or limit God’s grace, we can not become fully human. We remain corrupted by sin. We do not reflect the image of God.

If we freely receive God’s grace we are transformed. We can become fully human. We can reflect the image of God to the world. This does not happen overnight, for the corruptive forces of the world may still hold some allure for us. As we continue to ask and receive more and more of God’s grace, just as the resident asked for more church juice, we become more fully human. We are drawn closer in our relationship to God. We share in the divine life with God.

We share in this divine life, in which we reflect the image of God, by obedience. The fall occurred by human disobedience to God. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, our restoration can only come through obedience. Albert Edward Day, a Christian writer of the last century, in his book *The Captivating Presence* relates that “Obedience is indispensable. Not to a static code, however helpful it may be at times. But obedience to God, who is present with us in every situation and is speaking to us all the time.”²

1 St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. by a Religious of C. S. M. V. (Crestwood, NY, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996) 41.

2 Albert Edward Day, *The Captive Presence*, Quoted in *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants*, Norman Shawchuck and Rueben P. Job (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1983) 67.

It is not that we are obedient to a bunch of laws and rules. Let's face it, Jesus was known to break a few laws and rules. But we are obedient to the will of God for us as Jesus was obedient to the will of God. We begin to become fully human as we surrender our human will to God's divine will. As we are obedient to God's will, we become more fully human, more in the image of God.

As we receive God's continually transforming grace, surrendering our will to the will of God we become more fully human, in the image of God. We reflect the attributes of God as stated in Exodus 34: 6-7:

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. (NRSV)

As God is merciful, we become merciful.

As God is gracious, we become gracious.

As God is slow to anger, we become slow to anger.

As God abounds in steadfast love, we abound in steadfast love.

As God abounds in faithfulness, we abound in faithfulness.

As God keeps steadfast love, we keep steadfast love.

As God forgives iniquity, transgressions and sin, we forgive iniquity, transgression and sin.

As God does not clear the guilty, we do not clear the guilty, meaning the guilty will suffer consequences for their actions but may be forgiven.

As we reflect these attributes, we reflect God to the world.

That is what it means to be fully human, to reflect the image of God in creation as God originally intended. Jesus revealed this to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus revealed to the fullness of humankind.

As we ask for and receive God's grace each day, nay, each moment of our lives, we are transformed, day by day, moment by moment, into the image of God reflected to the world. We surrender our will to God's will, becoming fully human and sharing in the divine life with God.

