

Transfiguration—February 14, 2021
Text: Mark 9:2-9
Theme: From Transfiguration to Zion

We celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration today. This is always celebrated on the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany. Epiphany is a season in which Jesus becomes more and more clear to us. We see him heal the sick, cast out demons, and call people to faith. Finally, on the last Sunday we join Peter, James and John on the mountaintop and see him reveal just a brief glimpse of his full glory as the Son of God.

It is no accident that this day is celebrated just before the season of Lent. For the next six weeks we will be focused on our sinfulness and on the extreme price of our salvation. We will descend into the pit of despair as we come face to face once more with the totality of our depravity and our absolute lack of real remorse most of the time. How do we endure 6 weeks of this drilling without Novocain? The way we survive Lent every year is the power that is revealed to us on the Feast of the Transfiguration. When we see the glory of God revealed on that mountain top, and we know that nothing can stop us because just as the full glory of the Godhead dwells in Christ, so the full glory of Christ dwells in us.

That is why it matters in the Old Testament reading that Moses had to veil his face after talking to the Lord. The glory of God was so

powerful that it made Moses spiritually radioactive. He could not be beheld by ordinary eyes. You and I, on the other hand do not just stand in Christ's presence, we consume his very body and blood. You and I carry within us the very Christ. That's how we overcome sin in our lives and endure hardship brought upon us by our own sin and the sins of those around us. We are pure spiritual power and we rise above all the sin. Yes, we have been corrupted by sin and the corruption will be with us until the end of the world but that does not negate the reality of who we are because of who we contain.

I think the primary problem Christians have is not a failure to live a life worthy of Christ. The primary problem is that we often neither believe in nor use the tremendous power we have. We are like Clark Kent if he didn't believe he was really Superman. Imagine him living a quiet, frightened life where the bullies regularly kicked sand in his face and mocked him. He would cower because he simply did not believe that he had the power within him to do anything else. You are not Clark Kent. You are Superman. If you ever doubt it read the account of the Transfiguration.

"And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus" That is who lives inside you. You are a spiritual giant

washed in the holy waters and fed with the very body and blood of the Lord Christ. There is no sin you cannot overcome and no hardship you cannot conquer. That's what will get you through the valley of Lent and onto the next mountain where we will see our King burst forth from the tomb.

In many ways, we are like Peter, James and John who were on that mountain with Jesus. You know I have often laughed at Peter who wanted to build places on the mountain for everyone to sleep.

"And Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified." It seems as though Peter just wants to stay up on that mountain with Jesus, Elijah and Moses and forget about the rest of the world. But some theologians have been kinder to Peter than, I and suggested that he thought this was the end of the world when the Messiah had come to dwell with his people forever. I suppose seeing Moses and Elijah, men who he had known to be dead for many hundreds of years, standing there in the flesh with Jesus could have easily been seen as the beginning of the Parousia – the end of the world – that which the people of God had been expecting the Messiah to usher in. Well, Peter was right. This was the Messiah and he was ushering in the end of the world, but it was not quite time to build shelters and

settle in for eternity. There was still much to do. Jesus had to die on the cross, be damned to Hell, raised from the dead, ascend into heaven and THEN return to usher us into the Parousia.

We are often like Peter. We want Jesus to be here now! We're tired of viruses and politics and death and loss. But like Peter learned, so too do we. There is much work still to be done. We have been made superhuman for a reason. There are still so many who are distant from Jesus. They live as though he is unimportant. They confuse the brokenness of the church with the holiness of Christ. They mistake warnings of death and destruction for judgement upon them as human beings. We have so much work to do. I've been doing this job for more than 30 years and sometimes it seems like I am just now beginning to figure it out.

We sometimes think that knowing how to bring people to Christ is about having enough knowledge. Sometimes we think we have to be perfect examples. Sometimes we think maybe we don't have anything pertinent to say but what I have learned is this. We're just vessels. We fill ourselves with Jesus and carry him to people and empty ourselves into them, turn around and come back to the Word and the Sacrament to fill up again. Have you ever seen the DC-10s that they use to fight forest fires? They fill these giant planes with fire retardant chemicals and fly over the fire dumping

their cargo. All that stuff in a giant plane and it looks like someone trying to fill a bathtub with a thimble. But over time, with enough loads, the fire is put out and the forest is redeemed. The fire fighters have confidence in the chemicals and the process, knowing that over time, they will put out the fire and save the forest. We have confidence in the Word, and we are empowered by the one who dwells within us to keep proclaiming that Word. That is our calling. That is the process we have been given and as we descend into the valley of Lent remembering the sin from which we have been freed and rejoicing in the power of God with which we have been invested. Like Peter, we want Jesus to hurry up and get here. But until he does, like those fire fighters, we trust in the tools and the process.