

Jesu Juva

“Transfigured and Transformed”

Text: Mark 9:2-9; 2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Whatever glory you are able to achieve in this life - however well-known your name, however high you can climb on the corporate ladder, whatever the number of degrees you earn, however big your house or successful your business or happy your family - none of that even begins to compare to the glory we heard about today in the Transfiguration of Jesus. In fact, the current economic downturn and recession are opening the eyes of many to just how frail and fleeting *anything* we can achieve in this life really is. Glory and success may not be so easy to come, but oh how easily it can all be taken away. And when it is, that's usually when we find out that the glory we dressed ourselves with is not who we really are at all. That under the nice-looking and successful garb of who we want to be and who we want others to think we are - underneath is a poor, miserable, self-absorbed sinner. A poor, miserable, self-absorbed sinner who is sometimes disappointed in yourself, sometimes frightened that others might see you for who you really are, and who wants *anything but* for all that to be exposed. We're just like our first parents who tried to cover their shame with fig leaves in the garden - it's just that our fig leaves are a little more sophisticated today.

And so the way we are has taught us to be skeptical of *others* - that appearances are deceiving, that promises are often empty, and if you are able to have anything, hold onto it as tightly as you can because someone else is going to try to get it from you. For how I am on the inside is how others are on the inside.

But there is one man for whom that is not true. One man who was not a poor, miserable, self-absorbed sinner like the rest of us. One man who, in fact, one day took some friends up on a mountain, pulled aside the “outer garb” of His human flesh and blood . . . and showed that He was by nature much more glorious than His outer appearance revealed. That unlike us, who try to hide our shame with glorious garb, He came and hid His glory under humble human flesh and blood. He did so not to deceive us, but so that He could live among us. He did so not to spy on us, but to have mercy on us. He did so not to get from us, but to give to us. For as the Voice said, when Jesus' glory was revealed and the cloud overshadowed them: this man that looked like an ordinary man was, in fact, no ordinary man, but

the beloved Son of God. [So] Listen to Him! Listen to Him, for His words and promises are not empty, but filled with the love, the life, and the Spirit of God.

And so Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John - or in other words, the appearance of His figure was transformed to show them who He really was, to show them His glory - in order to prepare them for what they were soon to see . . . another transfiguration, a different transfiguration . . . when Jesus' whipped, pierced, bruised, beaten, and bloodied body, would be hung in a twisted, disfigured mess on the cross. When they would hear the Son say to the Father: *why have you forsaken me?* And when the people on His right and left would not be Moses and Elijah, but two common criminals. When they saw this, Jesus knew they would be filled with fear and doubt.

And so Jesus is transfigured now to enable them - *and us* - to see what is really happening on the cross. That the life of Jesus is not being taken, but given. That this is not the punishment of an ordinary man, but the self-sacrifice of our glorious God. That Jesus hangs not in shame, but in the glory of His self-giving love. And that His death means the life of the world. For on the cross, Jesus dies not under the Law of Moses, but to fulfill it. On the cross, Jesus accomplishes all that the prophets (like Elijah) lived and spoke. For on the cross, the One whose clothes ***became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them*** - did so because He was the spotless, pure, and holy Lamb of God, now taking away the sin of the world. The Lamb whose blood washes us clean of the shame of our sin, and make us intensely pure and holy and white again. As no one on earth could. For only God could. Only His forgiveness. Only His atonement. Only His life could give us life again.

And when Jesus rose from the dust of death, it was so. For, you see, with Jesus, the only thing that is empty is His tomb. His words and promises are not empty (like ours often are), but filled with His Spirit and life. And so when we ***listen to Him***, we receive that Spirit and life . . . *and we are transfigured*. Transfigured not in the same way as He was - but as St. Paul said, ***transformed*** into what He is: a son of God. Transformed through His forgiveness, so that the sin and shame we try so hard to hide be not just covered, but taken away, and a new person, holy and blameless, now live in us.

And so as we prayed in the Collect of the Day earlier: *In the voice that came from the bright cloud You wonderfully foreshowed our adoption by grace*. Yes, the transfiguration foreshows our adoption for that same voice that spoke those words of sonship at Jesus' Baptism, and again in His Transfiguration, spoke those words to us when we were baptized, the place of our transfiguration and adoption as sons of God. **That what Jesus is by nature, we might be by grace**. For Jesus came into our flesh and blood to take all that is ours, and to give us all that is His. That as we also prayed in the Collect: *He might make us co-heirs with Him in His glory and bring*

us to the fullness of our inheritance in Heaven.

For that is the goal of our transfiguration - to dwell with Jesus, Moses, Elijah, and all the saints who have gone before us. And though, like Elisha, we may not like it when our faithful loved ones are taken from us, and we may not wish to think or speak of it - we know that they are being taken into Heaven and given their inheritance as sons of God. And notice *where* that happened for Elijah! Heaven is not opened at Gilgal or Bethel or Jericho, but only after he passes through the waters of the Jordan - the same waters Jesus was baptized in. And for us, Heaven is open after we pass through waters also - the waters where we are baptized into Jesus, into His death and resurrection, and are given His Spirit and the promise of eternal life.

But for now, we stand with Elisha and tear our clothes - an ancient way of demonstrating mourning and sadness. The promise is ours, the inheritance is ours, but we are not yet there in its fullness. And so now it is our turn, as we this week enter into the season of Lent, to rend not our garments, but our hearts, and expose in mourning and sadness what we try so hard to hide - our sin and shame. We will confess and repent. We will stop singing alleluia. . . . But only for a time. A wilderness time. 40 days. Until we get to Easter - or as Jesus told His disciples: ***Until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.*** And then, clothed with His robe of righteousness and eternal life, we will again rejoice with alleluias and songs of joy, for the veil that covered our hearts and minds, the veil which separated us from God, the veil of sin, is removed once and for all. Torn in two by Jesus, to reunite us with our Father in Heaven.

Jesus left the Mount of Transfiguration that day to do that work. Just as He descended from Heaven to be born in Bethlehem, so now He descends the mount to be crucified on Calvary. He brings His glory to earth, to bring it to you. Which He will do again today as He comes in His body and blood here on this altar. That eating His body and drinking His blood, you be ***transformed from one degree of glory to another.*** Transformed through His forgiveness and love. Until what we here see veiled in bread and wine, we one day see with unveiled face in Heaven. When we will see the *God of God and Light of Light* (LSB #810), and joyfully confess: *'Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here* (LSB #414). And we will never have to leave.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.