

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD
THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
FEBRUARY 14, 2021

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *Jesus on the Mountain Peak* Setting: Jonathan R. Mueller

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #415 *Jesus on the Mountain Peak*

- 1 **Jesus on the mountain peak
Stands alone in glory blazing;
Let us, if we dare to speak,
Join the saints and angels praising.
Alleluia!**
- 2 **Trembling at His feet we saw
Moses and Elijah speaking.
All the prophets and the law
Shout through them their joyful greeting:
Alleluia!**
- 3 **Swift the cloud of glory came:
God proclaiming in its thunder
Jesus as the Son by name!
Nations, cry aloud in wonder,
Alleluia!**
- 4 **This is God's beloved Son!
Law and prophets sing before Him,
First and Last and only One.
All creation shall adore Him!
Alleluia!**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Brief silence for reflection and self-examination.

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father:

We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God:

You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,

You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. O God,

in the glorious transfiguration of Your beloved Son You confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of Moses and Elijah. In the voice that came from the bright cloud You wonderfully foreshowed our adoption by grace. Mercifully make us co-heirs with the King in His glory and bring us to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



FIRST LESSON 2 Kings 2:1-12

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so." And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 50:1-6

The Mighty One, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

Our God comes; he does not keep silence;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a mighty tempest.

He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

"Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON 2 Corinthians 3:12–18; 4:1–6

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL Mark 9:2-9

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 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. 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. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

The veil or sack that Moses put over his face after he visited God on Mt Sinai was necessary to hide the brightness that shined from his face. His shining face scared the people of Israel. His face shined because He had been with God, and God's glorious light reflected off of him. God didn't need Moses to veil his face, the people did. And in today's 2nd lesson Paul harkens back to exactly that moment in Israel's history to assert that Israel's sense of God and His law was still veiled. Stubbornly they choose not to hear Him as He is.

Perhaps we have to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden to understand why we humans respond to God as He is. Adam and Eve hid from God after they sinned. They were ashamed. God's brightness shining from Moses' face connected Israel to Adam's shame; it underscored what the OT said, **"...that God was holy (separate) and we are not."** Isaiah said he hid his face from God's unfettered glory when God appeared to him in a vision/a dream. And In our Gospel for today the disciples hid their faces in the ground because the glory of Sinai and the Throne room was on the top of that mountain. Jesus shined with glory as was only God's.

"God is light," John says, and that light shined in Jesus so brightly that the disciples couldn't look at Him. By contrast, Elisha was invited to watch all the glory that would shine as God took his mentor, Elijah, home to heaven in a fiery chariot. Although all of the Sunday's in Epiphany have promised glimpses of the glory of God in Jesus, this Sunday shines with all His glory. On this day all of the wraps came off, and the Father bathed Jesus in unfettered light. Jesus Himself shined with the same light. Whatever the word **"transfigure"** means, in this Gospel it means that Jesus is **"God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,"** as our father's and mother's confessed at Nicea.

We Lutherans are unique in the western catholic Church in observing the transfiguration of our Lord on the last Sunday of Epiphany. The rest of the church marks this day in August, and nowhere else is it even a major feast day. But somewhere in our evolution of Lutheran liturgy someone discovered that this was the text and the event with which to culminate all that is Epiphany's light. We began this season by reminding each other that **"Epiphany"** means **"to reveal, or shine,"** and the ultimate revelation and shining is this one. Like Moses' journey to the top of Mt Sinai, this happened on a mountain top. We have mentioned both Moses and Elijah in the sermon already, both taken to their dying places by God Himself. It is no accident that both of them, whose names summarize all of the law and the prophets, no accident that these two came to this mountain to speak to Jesus. Whether from beyond the grave or from the grave itself, we cannot know. But just the appearance of Elijah would have been seen anywhere in Israel as evidence that the Messianic age had dawned. Here we see it not only dawn, but shine with the brightness of God's much loved Son. And if we were listening to Luke, we would also learn that Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about His death.

Jesus shined, His clothes dazzled, and as at His Baptism, God spoke. **"This is My Son, the much loved Son. Listen to Him."** Ours is an age of pyrotechnics, fireworks, voice amplifications that can move mountains. We can put very bright spotlights almost anywhere. Folks in 2021 would probably market Moses' face rather than put a bag over it. But none of us, anywhere, in any venue, can shine from within with the brightness of the sun. Jesus did. And God showered His blessing on Him. This is the single moment before Jesus' Ascension when His 3 closest disciples see the answer to their often asked question, **"What sort of man is this that the winds and demons obey?"** He is the God of all come to earth as our brother, Who sets His face from this moment to offer His life as a ransom for many.

Jesus came down from the mountain and launched His ministry toward Jerusalem, and everything written of Him in the law and the prophets. Jesus was on the road on which, **"for us and for our salvation, He came down, and suffered and was crucified, and was buried,"** the road on which all

of this took place. It is what He had been talking about six days before, the date to which Mark ties the transfiguration. But the disciples couldn't put this all together until after His resurrection and ascension. They prove that here by trying to build houses or tents to prolong their stay on the mountain. The mission of Jesus wasn't to shine like the sun on the top of a mountain, or to be worshipped by sages from far off nations in Bethlehem. The mission of Jesus was to go to Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and the prophet's sons, and there to offer Himself for us all.

This shining moment was most of all for Jesus. Here the Father wrapped Him in His warm embrace and blessed the road He had chosen in obedience to the Father: the *via dolorosa*, the way of the cross. And when all the disciples deserted Him, when Jerusalem screamed, "**Crucify,**" the Father's voice would nourish His soul. When His loneliness became so great that He cried, "**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?**," Jesus' union with the Father on the mountain would warm His weary soul. And this vision sustained the early church. St. Peter testified, "**We did not follow cleverly devised myths. We were with Him on the Holy Mountain.**"

This day is also for us. We who often wonder if our God is up to the task of being with us, up to facing down the viruses and demons, our winds and sea; for us, transfiguration shines. We who often wonder if He is focused on us and what matters most to us, will see Him fix His eyes on what matters. We who not only build houses next to our glory moments – we call them stadiums and theaters now - we who chase after the glittering things of the world and deny the necessity of suffering, transfiguration shines. He shines for us. He is Lord. And He chose to lay aside all this glory out of love for us, His wayward and scattered sheep. He chose to go to Jerusalem that we might have a place at our Father's table.

We don't veil our faces nearly enough, nor confess the brightness of His glory in our lives. But He is with us just the same. He loves us and gathers us from our worst betrayals, so we can be with Him in His glorious Kingdom.

One final word about Jesus' brightness: St. John reminds us that in God's full Kingdom we will no longer need sun or moon or lights to shine our way in heaven, because the Lamb is among us and He is light enough for all. Part of faith is seeing Him so, Light enough for all; part of faith is reflecting His light, for the sake of all others; part of faith is converting His light to deeds of mercy, connecting the world with Jesus. The rest of faith is to see Him near, at the very door.

HYMN OF THE DAY #412 O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair

- 1 **O wondrous type! O vision fair
Of glory that the Church may share,
Which Christ upon the mountain shows,
Where brighter than the sun He glows!**
- 2 **With Moses and Elijah nigh
The incarnate Lord holds converse high;
And from the cloud the Holy One
Bears record to the only Son.**
- 3 **With shining face and bright array
Christ deigns to manifest today
What glory shall be theirs above
Who joy in God with perfect love.**

- 4 **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.**
- 5 **O Father, with the_ eternal Son
And Holy Spirit ever one,
We pray Thee, bring us by Thy grace
To see Thy glory face to face.**

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, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

OFFERING *O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair* Setting: Stephen Gabrielsen

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Heavenly Father, You revealed Your glory in the transfiguration of Your Son, who tabernacled among us and became our brother. Open our eyes to see Him among us still in Word and Sacrament and prayer; help us heed Your admonition to "listen to Him" still as He leads us on the path of life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy Father, with the appearance of Moses and Elijah, You declared that all the Law and the prophets are fulfilled in Jesus. Bless all pastors and servants of Your Church, fill their lives with ministries that proclaim Jesus, Jesus and only Jesus. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, You alone establish all authority in heaven and on earth. Bless those entrusted to lead and guide our dear land, and every nation on earth, that they would serve well and faithfully, and for the good of all. Especially bless all of those who bring relief and care during this pandemic. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, comfort and strengthen those who are sick, hospitalized or receiving ongoing treatment, [especially _____,] that they would know Your peace and receive healing from Your gracious hand. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, how lovely is the dwelling place of Your Son, Who gives us sinners precious food to eat and to drink, His body and blood, given and shed for us. Grant to all who feast today repentant and believing hearts, and forgiveness, life and salvation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember on this day the glorious manifestation of Your Son's divinity on the Mount of Transfiguration. Teach us to listen to Jesus and ever fix our eyes on Him. Strengthen us to remain faithful to Him, preserve us to our journey's end, and help us to ever look forward, with all Your saints, especially Valentine, Philemon and Onesimus, to the feast of life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR LAYING ASIDE "ALLELUIA"

Heavenly father, alleluias fill our hearts when we stand
Before you. We are ever in awe of your majesty, mercy and
Love. Now as we lay aside our alleluias for the more somber
Language of lent, grant that we hunger and thirst, not just
To sing alleluia again at Easter, but that we hunger for the
Feast you promise, with Abraham, Isaac and all the blessed
Ones. Forgiven, renewed and much loved, bring us to that
Day, Father, where you live in beauty with the Son and the
Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

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 and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

SENDING HYMN #417 Alleluia, Song of Gladness

- 1 Alleluia, song of gladness,
Voice of joy that cannot die;
Alleluia is the anthem
Ever raised by choirs on high;
In the house of God abiding
Thus they sing eternally.**
- 2 Alleluia, thou resoundest,
True Jerusalem and free;
Alleluia, joyful mother,
All thy children sing with thee,
But by Babylon's sad waters
Mourning exiles now are we.**

- 3 Alleluia cannot always
Be our song while here below;
Alleluia, our transgressions
Make us for a while forgo;
For the solemn time is coming
When our tears for sin must flow.**
- 4 Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee,
Grant us, blessed Trinity,
At the last to keep Thine Easter
With Thy faithful saints on high;
There to Thee forever singing
Alleluia joyfully.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE Alleluia, Song of Gladness Setting: John Ferguson

Acknowledgments

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