

The Transfiguration of our Lord – 2025

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Hebrews 3:1-6

Luke 9:28-36

He gets us. Have you seen the ads, the television ads? They're billed as an unthreatening reintroduction to Christ. The commercials depict our fellow man in various unhappy situations – conflict, poverty, addiction, loneliness, sickness. It's an unvarnished look at difficulty – spiritual, emotional and physical. The ads are brief. There's nothing flowery about them. They're gritty and unpolished and dark. The commercials end with a reference to the Lord Jesus and the tag line. The tag line is "He gets us." I could be wrong, but I believe that the intent of the commercial is to assure the viewer that the Lord Christ understands the unpleasant realities of the broken world in which we live, the unsavory grime that percolates around us, in us. He gets us. My take is that the ads are intended to convey the notion that our Lord doesn't turn away from what is ugly. That is most certainly true. To put forward this idea to a hesitant, unbelieving public is an admirable pursuit. He gets us. Amen. But the converse is more interesting to me. Do we get Him? Isn't that what you want – to understand Him, to know Him, to relate and grasp and learn from Him?

The Transfiguration of our Lord is an eye-opening event. What is the Lord up to? Why do we have this marvelous account in the Scripture? What led up to Jesus taking Peter, James and John up this mountain? Jesus wanted to know if the people got Him. Immediately prior to the Transfiguration, He asked; "Who do the crowds say that I am?" (Luke 9:18). The Lord didn't need information. Jesus was teaching His disciples, leading the disciples down a path of discovery. Who do the crowds say that I am? The disciples repeated the misidentification that they had heard on the street. Then Jesus honed in on the twelve. "But who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20). Peter spoke for them all: "The Christ of God" (Luke 9:20). What a moment! What a confession! The Lord took full advantage of that moment. Jesus tells them two things. First, He tells them what He must do (Luke 9:22). Second, the Lord tells them that His life will invade His disciples' lives and that it cannot be otherwise (Luke 9:23-27). To grasp that Jesus is the Christ leads to Him talking about His cross and talking about His life invading ours. Only after that, only after tethering His Messianic reality to His suffering and us denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following Him does He take Peter, James and John up the mountain.

True God and true man in one person – you couldn't tell just by looking at Him. The Son of God had laid aside His divine prerogatives. He humbled Himself and took up the form of a servant. There was no majesty in His appearance. And yet, this is the eternal I AM, the Author of Creation, the Divine Progenitor of all that is. Infinite power resides in this man, and He laid it aside. Glory; what is your mental image of God's glory? Moses wanted to see it. It's totally understandable. "Please show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). It was a bold request. It was denied... sort of. God put Moses in the cleft in the rock and caused all of His glory to pass by Moses. But God covered Moses face with God's hand until He had passed by. Then God removed His hand and allowed Moses to see His back (Exodus 33:19-23). Glory; has God revealed His glory to you?

On the mountain, the Lord Jesus is transfigured. His clothing becomes blindingly white, His face shines like the sun; the radiance of Jesus divine nature is shining through His humanity. Peter, James and John see it. On that mountain, heaven and earth overlap. Moses and Elijah are there. The heavenly persons of Moses and Elijah are there – consummate representatives of the OT, heroes of the faith, the embodiment of the Law and the Prophets – and they are talking with the Lord. Do y'all know what an "own-goal" is? It's a self-inflicted wound, an error that hurts your own side. An "own-goal" is a soccer reference when you put the ball into your own net. Do you know what our English translation is for what Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about? It says that they spoke of His "departure," which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Do you know what word the Greek uses? Exodus; they were talking about His Exodus.

The most astounding event in the OT was the Israelites' Exodus out of slavery in Egypt. The plague of death swept through Egypt and the Israelites were protected by the blood of Lamb. God had directed them to slaughter a year-old-lamb without blemish or defect at twilight and then smear its blood around their doors. The angel of death would see the blood and "Passover" that house. The Lord prepared a table for the Israelites in the presence of their enemies. While death swept through Egypt, the Israelites were eating the roasted lamb in their homes. They were delivered, set free. Shortly after, God opened up the Red Sea. The people were set free through water which drowned their foe. The Exodus! Christ's Exodus; Moses and Elijah weren't talking about something as generic as Jesus' departure; they were talking about how the Lord would fulfill the OT and take His people out of this broken world, a world where we are slaves to sin and Satan and death, and take us to the Promised Land, take us to heaven. The Exodus in the OT is significant only because it points to Jesus. He said: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). Our English translation makes an "own-goal." Our translation tries its hardest to not to see something that is right there in plain sight. What would Jesus' Exodus entail?

It was brutal; such suffering; ignominy, pain, injustice, the Lord of glory became an object of scorn, lies and hate and torture and all things grotesque. The sinless Son of God would be infused with our wretchedness. The Holy One would embody adultery and greed and murder. The One who only knows how to give would embody thievery. The One who only knows truth would bear all the lies of man. And God the Father would punish it as it deserves to be punished. That is what Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about. Your forgiveness; your redemption; your faith; that's the conversation Jesus is having with Moses and Elijah. The brutality of the atonement; eternal Love offering Himself as a sacrifice; that's the glory of Christ the King; that's what we are to have in our mind when God's glory is spoken of – a brutal cross, a torn body, a loving sacrifice, a Messiah who suffers and by that suffering defeats sin and opens heaven. There will be no "own-goals" in this holy house. The Transfiguration of our Lord teaches us what to see when we look at Jesus crucified on the cross. That's the glory God wants us to see. There is no other way to access His glory but by the shame of the cross.

That's what you are to see when you see a fellow Christian bear his or her cross in faith, in humility, in cheerful submission to God's holy will. God shows His glory in lowly things. It is true, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). It is true, when

we are weak then we are strong (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is true, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place through the new and living way, through the curtain of Christ's flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20).

How many of y'all ever wonder what this life is all about? How many of y'all ever get blue or feel like you're losing momentum, losing spiritual oomph or that your faith feels flat? One of my sons told me that my sermons always sound like a "call-to-arms." I'm not sure that it was a compliment. We need momentum in this life. We need fuel, juice, inspiration. That's what God's Word is, God's living and active Word. God shares His glory. That's our momentum. Joshua took Israel into the Promised Land and the new and greater Joshua, the Lord Jesus, is taking us to heaven. That's our momentum. His Exodus is our Exodus. We eat the Lamb that was slain, partaking of His body and blood. His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink (John 6:55). That's our momentum. We see His glory by faith and we know that whatever we suffer in this world is not worth comparing to the glory that shall be revealed to us, in us (Romans 8:18). That's the momentum God's Word provides. Heaven and earth overlap in this Divine Service. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). The One who was transfigured on the mountain, who showed Peter, James, and John His glory, is the same One who is among us as One who serves (Luke 22:27). Christ serves us – that's our momentum. To be sure, Jesus gets us. He also makes sure of this – He makes sure that we get Him (Matthew 16:17). That's what lifts my spirit to the heights. I hope that it lifts yours as well.