

Sermon - February 26, 2017 - The Transfiguration of Our Lord,

The Invisible Is Available!

2 Peter 1:16-21



Dear friends in Christ,

The transfiguration of Jesus is an astonishing account with a lot of moving parts. There is Jesus radiating with divine glory. There are Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about his crucifixion. There are the cloud of God's glory and the voice from heaven. There are the disciples who behold a marvelous glory. And there is us, here this morning, who with the disciples also behold his glory even now as we, with one another are in another time, another place but with the same glory.

It must have been an exceedingly marvelous sight for the disciples who witnessed it. Wish I was there! But then maybe we are there, only we don't see the clouds or Moses and Elijah in person; but we do see, we do behold God's glory even now. Or do we? Do you really behold that Glory?

The apostle Peter in his second letter talks about it. He tells us that that was a "Majestic Glory." He wants his readers to have a taste of it. And more importantly, that that what happened on that mountain, the Majestic Glory was for the benefit of all, as it was the revealing of Jesus power and His majesty.

Peter was nearing his death, he says so in the previous verses, but he wants the majesty of Jesus' glory to remain in his disciples. Just as Jesus remains forever and his words will never change.

Now, here are some more questions for us this morning. When the sky becomes dark gray and clouds over for rain, does the sun still shine? When you go to sleep, does the rest of the world cease to exist?

Now, what do those questions have to do with Jesus Transfiguration? It seems that we forget that Jesus transfiguration is also for us. It's there for us eve when think Jesus glory is not shining. There are lots of things that prevent us from seen his glory even now, but for our sake I would like to talk about one thing.

That our pilgrimage on this earth, our life here, seems too often glory-less. You will probably agree with me that this life is difficult, and as it turns out we find that the world is not our friend, although the irony is that we like the world so much that we don't want to leave it behind.

Have you seen how the courts of our country, how government leaders all over the world, as well as entire church bodies, are losing their way? Violence, sexual sins, materialism, drugs, and a culture of dishonesty run rampant around us. Not to mention persecution of immigrants on one hand, and xenophobia on the other. If you are on either side, fear runs rampant. Due to my experience in immigration settlement back in Vancouver, I have been asked questions lately regarding immigration, from immigrants living in the US, people there are living in fear, they want peace and security, the protection of their integrity.

How then are we able to survive without mixing ourselves or giving up to this temptations and attractions? How can we survive and be kept holy? How then are we to survive in peace, if peace seems fleeting? The last thing we can see, or at least the last think we want to see is God's glory. Or we ask ourselves, where is God's glory when we need it?

But God's glory is here, now, today. Yes we might not see what the first disciples saw or hear back then, but none-the-less, God's voice is here with us, for us through Jesus. Hear what Jesus says: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Where is God's glory when you need it? In His word!

As if not enough, our own flesh fails us. At times living our faith in our journey is a struggle, isn't it? We slip backwards into old sins or fall headlong into new ones, with all of their consequences. We cannot trust ourselves to do what is best. The arm of flesh fails us constantly, and when we fail and fall, we ask, where is God's glory? Here in God's word is God's glory. Hear what the Apostle says: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

Let's read it together again "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) Now let those words sink a little bit.....

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) That's great news that reveals God's glory for each one of us. Why? because the devil is constantly tempting. He has plenty of practice and is proficient at the art of temptation. He is more persistent than we are.

But when we do what the Scripture tells us something happens. The apostle James gives us this word: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) Where is God's glory? In a cloud and voices? No, it happened there at the moment of Jesus transfiguration, but it extends to you today. So when the devil flees from you, there is God's glory in all its power working for you. On our own we can't even begin to scare the devil, let alone make him run. Our roar mounts to nothing really. Our roar against the devil mounts to nothing, until the Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5) roars for you.

Therefore submitting to God is the right thing to do, that we run away from sin into the forgiving arms of Christ, into his delivering power against the evil one.

That's good news. But... if only you knew what I'm going through this moment... right? When our journey becomes weary, we may wish we had lived in Jesus' day and could walk with him and seen what the first disciples saw. Don't you wish you were there too? However, be careful what you wish for! As pastor, I worry that I may have taken the side of the Pharisees had I lived back then, yes become a legalistic Pharisee. But, why should we wish for another time and place when God has brought us to this time and place to serve him? God's glory is revealed also here and now.

Yet, at time we may seek glorious signs, trying thereby to prove to ourselves that God is interested in us personally.

Now days we even have an entire industry of fraud that has been built up around the miraculous, the so spiritual, and so religious, which is fueled by the inner

spiritual desire to be important to God, either by holding on to God's laws and tradition only, or by promoting a sense of the new age spirituality, forgetting God's laws.

At times we may also wonder what God is doing when others get that for which they prayed and we do not. We get jealous and ask God what about me? Or we simply assume that God is not on our side.

It is part of our sinful nature that we lose the importance of God's blessing in our lives. We are so blessed, and because we are blessed, we should ascribe those blessing because of the glory of God. But instead we hear ourselves say, "Yes, God, but what have you done for me lately?"

Brothers and Sisters, it is the sending of a Savior, not the performing of glorious signs, that is God's specific pleasure toward us. The transfiguration pointed people to their Savior. We are glad for the Scriptures, which do the same for us. God is personally interested in us. As with the transfiguration, it is the Savior, not the sign that is the ultimate. Today....

As Christians, we have an unshakable witness! The invisible is available!

The power and heavenly glory shown at the transfiguration is available to us, even if at times it comes in veiled form.

Every time we have communion, God's glory is revealed there. At the Lord's altar we dine with him who is unseen, yet we celebrate His Real Presence.

Did you ever stop, when in prayer after Communion, to think about the path—in all of life or in the prior week—that brought you to this altar? What a powerful, life-changing God we have! The Lord promised you his very body and blood and sealed its covenant with blood as your guarantee. What an unfailing God we have!

His Supper brings a foretaste of the heavenly feast for which we long and reminds us that the earthly economies are passing away. What a steadfast God of hope we have!

In Holy Baptism we have been personally endowed with all that God has for us. We are named and listed in God's family Book of Life and given his name.

We are marked with the blood of Christ, that we and the world may know whose we are. We are set upon a road of discipleship (Mt 28:18-20) of following Jesus in life, death, and resurrection (Rom 6:4-8).

In the transfiguration, the prophetic Word was "made more certain"; the cross has made it "most certain." Here God's Word, the Bible, is the unerring witness. The Lord of glory became flesh for us—a humiliating transfiguration. The Son the bright Morning Star, suffered for us—a horrible disfiguration.

The Beloved, to whom we should listen, died, sacrificing himself for us—a blessed configuration of God's justice and mercy. The crucified one rose—a thrilling pre-figuration of our own resurrection to life.

The depths of the cross and the apex of the transfiguration are all part of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (v 16) and of his illuminating rise in our hearts (v 19b). Thus, the invisible IS available! Jesus' transfiguration shows US his power AND heaven's surrounding presence ON OUR daily pilgrimage.

But it is not your too keep solely for yourself. We have to share with our neighbor. We help in crisis, rolling up our sleeves and sacrificing our time to be with them. We share Jesus' Gospel of the cross directly, promise to pray for them, or invite

them to church. We support and become part of endeavors that take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

God's glory is seen in the fact that we have the most certain hope for ourselves when the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh have unleashed their worst. God's glory is revealed to us as the beauty of a full forgiveness is ours. God's glory is revealed to us in the fact that in His death on the Cross of Calvary we have a clean slate, a new start. God's glory is ours in the assurance that our Teacher and Lord is leading us through life each day. God's glory is the victory of knowing that death is not the final word or the gate to great and eternal punishment for us believers; rather, it is the portal to our actual realization of the same glory once witnessed, so today we ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.

Today just as Peter gained confidence looking at his own death by looking to Jesus' transfiguration, so we look at God's glory in all of what we have seen in our own lives, always praising God for his glorious presence in our lives, until he comes and takes us with Him to our eternal home.

In His name, amen.