

## Sermon: Our Faith Journey

In my many years of pulpit supply, I can't tell you the number of times that I have preached on the transfiguration of Jesus, and how my mother and I would wonder how I might preach about it each time, in an effort to send a new message. I struggle to make it's presentation in a different way of interpreting its meaning.

I tried to find some of my old sermons on this topic and was amazed when I couldn't find any of my old sermons. Changing laptops and saving files where I think I can find them, doesn't always work. I think that mom hid them on purpose.

In our reading from Mark today, the gospel writer is telling a story that says something about the dazzling light of God's presence shining through to us and around us as we live our daily lives. It is a light we often do not see as we go about the normality of our daily lives.

When we look at all that is happening in the world around us, I have a feeling many of us tend to ask, "Where is God in all of this?"

We live in a culture in which we think God is out there somewhere. Maybe way up on a mountain top, far removed from our everyday experience.

Through our study of the Bible, we are taught that we should seek out the presence of God.

However, the reality is that we cannot seek out God's presence, we cannot earn God's presence to us, we cannot prove ourselves worthy of God's presence, nor can we do anything to prohibit God's presence to us.

The deepest truth given to us in today's story is that we are always, totally and completely enveloped in the presence of God.

As we look at today's gospel reading, whatever happened on top of that unnamed mountain remains a mystery. There simply is no rational or logical explanation for this event that was witnessed by Peter, James, and John.

Whatever happened, the transfiguration, as it came to be known, is an event that was primarily for the disciples' benefit.

Counter to what some suppose, this cannot be the revelation of Jesus' divinity; if it were, then it would make Elijah and Moses divine as well.

Neither should this be read as a final indulgence of prophetic genius in line with Moses and Elijah as if Jesus is in rank with their company. After all, it is Jesus who is distinguished from these historical figures, and it is he who is left standing alone when the divine voice enters the scene.

First and foremost, we should understand this is a story and we should let go of our need for facts and allow a deeper truth to speak.

In verse three something dramatic but not permanent happens to Jesus. His garments "became glistening, intensely white," indeed so white that even the best experts in bleaching, couldn't obtain such a result.

This is the "transfiguration." It means that Jesus changed in outward appearance or form.

Now this brings up an interesting question: Is the transfiguration a story of metamorphosis where Jesus changes into something he was not before? I don't think so. Metamorphosis is permanent. But this experience is really a revelation more than it is a transformation.

For the benefit of the disciples, Jesus' outward appearance transforms, and his inward nature of God's pure, light-filled presence is revealed. "The veil of commonness is drawn back, and a fuller reality is disclosed."

And, because the veil is drawn back, the disciples see something extraordinary for the first time. Jesus is totally and completely enveloped in the presence of God.

Have you ever looked at a magnified picture of a snowflake? If you have, from that point on, there is a sense in which one marvels at the beauty and uniqueness of every single snowflake.

Or do you remember the first time you looked at a speck of dirt through a microscope? Which up until then had seemed a boring little speck of dirt,

suddenly becomes something full of pattern, color, and even beauty. What you see through that microscope opens a whole different world and, from that point forward, you never look at specks of dirt the same way.

And you can begin to realize that, yes, everything now has the potential to be more than it seems. You see, the world we live in has many layers, many dimensions, and sometimes these dimensions, normally hidden, may appear. There is a much deeper reality than the commonness we see with the naked eye.

As the disciples see Jesus in today's story the veil is drawn back, and they see a deeper truth, a fuller reality – God is very present in this one they call Jesus.

And the disciples discovered they, themselves, were already living in the presence of God.

The truth is, we need moments where the veil of familiarity is drawn back, and a fuller reality is disclosed. We need the kind of experiences that allow us to discover a deeper truth. We need the kind of experiences that give us pause so that we might be reminded that we, too, are already living in the presence of God.

So often we ask God to be with us or with other people and we try to attain God's presence. But we cannot attain the presence of God because we're already totally in the presence of God. What's absent is our awareness.

Yes, what's absent is our awareness of the light of God's presence to us throughout the familiarity of our daily lives.

At the centre of Mark's gospel, the transfiguration of Jesus gave Peter, James, and John a glimpse of resurrection glory outside of time, and outside the limitations of their human understanding.

It would give shape for the future, providing them with an assurance of who Jesus was that would have come back to them after the crucifixion and resurrection. It was an important moment but, as we've seen, the journey needed to go on. Life is lived in the valley and on the plains where difficulties and challenges abound.

In our day-to-day life, we don't always hear God as clearly as we'd like. We get confused about the clarity we saw on the mountaintop, and we can't remember what it was like to see God face to face.

Nonetheless, God goes with us. We must look harder, listen more carefully, risk more completely, and we will find God in the valley, on the plains, in the people, as well as on the mountaintop.

So come on down: we've got some good news to share. Come on down, we've got people to reach. Come on down, we've got a journey to walk, as we turn with Jesus toward Jerusalem.

Come on down and listen full of awareness this Lent, for that still small voice which calls us by name to follow him and to play our part in building his kingdom here on earth to his praise and glory.

So, as we move through the words of Scripture today, let us let our daily lives be filled with the knowledge of the presence and light of God always being around us, and be willing to let that light shine into our lives.

Not just on Transfiguration Sunday, but every day set before us. Amen