



THE TRANSFIGURATION

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Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Transcendence – that which is beyond ordinary, common, human experience, is a common theme in today's readings. When we find something hard to grasp, we tend to concentrate on the material aspects of our faith. Yet, as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, God shines light into our hearts – the good news of Christ; so that we can begin to grasp what is beyond our human existence.

We say that God moves in mysterious ways, beyond what we can think of or imagine. Psalm 50 attempts to describe God in his mightiness and awe. The fiery chariot which carried Elijah to heaven and the dazzling brightness of Jesus on the Mount and are more than the mind can take in; and are only two of the many examples that the Bible gives us of the awesome nature of God.

We need not shy away from transcendent experiences but should welcome them, even seek them, since throughout history, God has spoken in and through them. He spoke to Elisha through the prophets who clearly anticipated that Elijah's time on earth was about to end. By permitting Elisha to see Elijah's departure, God bestowed His Spirit on him. There are clear parallels when the terrified disciples witnessed the dazzling display of brightness and cloud on the mountaintop and heard God speak. It was an event which deeply affected them and is significantly recorded in the three synoptic gospels Matthew Mark and Luke.



Elijah's prophetic ministry ends with a divine escort from earth. Israel's real power at this time was not the unrighteous Kings of Israel but the Lord working through his prophets. This story also confirms that the Lord chose Elisha to succeed Elijah.

The chariot of fire and horses of fire revealed the might of the Lord's army- and fire often marked divine

appearances and also Elijah went up to heaven without dying – similar to Enoch in Genesis 5.

In our gospel passage today, the transfiguration offers divine confirmation of Jesus' identity and teaching, including especially his recent declaration concerning his coming death and the centrality of cross-bearing for the new people of God. After six days means that the most specific and temporary connection in Mark's gospel is that it inseparably links the transfiguration's divine affirmation to Jesus of His recent teaching on his death and on cross-bearing discipleship – in the previous section. Verse 3 tells us that his clothes became dazzling white. Since God “wraps himself in light” wears clothing “as white as snow” and according to Jewish tradition, clothed himself in brilliant white at the creation, outshone all on Mount Sinai when he gave the law to Israel and wore white when he forgave Israel their sins that led to the exile, Jesus' glory testifies to his divine identity and significance. In Jesus, God's new exodus presence has uniquely come. Furthermore, whereas

Moses face shone after meeting God in the cloud during the exodus, Jesus radiates his own divine glory long before the cloud appears.

The presence of Elijah and Moses is sometimes taken to suggest that Jesus fulfils the law with Moses and the profits with Elijah. The only other place in the scriptures where the two are mentioned together is at the end of the book of Malachi – where the Prophet Elijah, in preparation for the Lord's coming, was to restore Israel to obedience to the mosaic law and in talking with them both together, this expression occurs only here in Mark's gospel – and once in the exodus account, where it describes Moses talking with God. Elijah and Moses had individually met with God on Mount Sinai / Mount Horeb. Here they talk with Jesus – which implies His divine superiority.

In verse five Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. It seems here that Peter couldn’t help himself – he had to say something –

but what he did say he hadn't had time to think it through. Jesus is far more than just a rabbi or a teacher, and Peter's suggestion misses Jesus' superiority over Elijah and Moses.

In verse 7, the voice from the cloud recalls God's affirmation of Jesus as Messiah at his baptism and God's speaking from the cloud on Sinai after six days. But instead of giving the law and instructions for the Tabernacle, God commands them and us to obey Jesus – who embodies both God's life-giving word and his presence. By saying "listen to him", God had promised to send a Prophet like Moses to whom Israel must listen; and Jesus has already applied a proverb concerning prophets to himself. This affirms particularly Jesus' teaching in the passage leading up to our gospel today concerning his death and discipleship. However, since to listen to Jesus is to do God's will, it also includes Jesus' past teaching on ritual purity and later instruction on status, divorce, and wealth.

And in verse 9, Jesus orders Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they have seen until the Son of man had risen from the dead. This is because Jesus wants nothing to interfere with his mission as the suffering servant. His transfigured glory can only be properly understood in the light of his suffering, death, and resurrection.



May we pray:

Thank you, JESUS, for bringing us into the experience of Your Father as He calls you His beloved. It is staggering for us that we are caught up in Your reality as You share GOD's divine life with each of us individually. May the Father's words – You are My Beloved – hum in our hearts as we journey with You – our morning star Amen.

