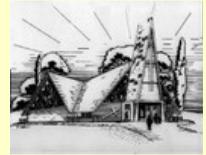




Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- Transfiguration of Jesus (Proper B) 2018

*The transfigured Jesus in conversation
with Moses and Elijah!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach



• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mk 9, 2-9 (10-13):

- ^{ESV} ¹ And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."
- ² And 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,
- ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.
- ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.
- ⁵ 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."
- ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.
- ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."
- ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.
- ⁹ 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.
- ¹⁰ So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. ¹¹ And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹² And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, let Your Word be a light in our hearts and reveal Christ, the place to be forever, to us. Amen.*
- **Dear Beloved of the Lord!**
- As the last hymn for this Sunday you might have noticed that it has become custom for me, to select "Beautiful Saviour". Verse 3 reads like this: "Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight, bright the sparkling stars on high. Jesus shines

brighter, Jesus shines purer than all the angels in the sky." A hymn loved by many. It fittingly conveys one of the basic truths of the passage for today: Jesus is purer and therefore shines brighter than the angels and anything else in nature. The Gospel of Mark highlights the fact that Jesus' garments became radiant, intensely white, as none on earth would ever be able to bleach them.

• Jesus' glory is revealed to these three disciples and it was written down for us. Jesus was transfigured, which is the same word as 'being changed in form'. This was no vision or mythological story. This was real. Jesus' face and garments changed their form into this brilliant radiant matter! Jesus' human nature participates in Jesus' godly nature! His human nature is filled and drenched with His godly nature. Him being God shines forth. Only God gives light of Himself. Human beings don't give light of themselves.

• But, Jesus is not alone. Two more people appear, Elijah and Moses. Moses, the minister of the Law, the Torah of God. Elijah, the prophet of God's promises. Both Moses and Elijah previously met with God on a mountain top and spoke to Him. Here they appear and were having a conversation with *Jesus*. Of course, they know each other! They have met before! What a beautiful peek into heaven is given to us! This is what the kingdom of heaven in glory is. Jesus has a conversation together with Moses and Elijah. He is the one who radiates the glory of heaven, the one from whom all wisdom and light comes!

• Now, imagine, being one of those three disciples witnessing this conversation in full heavenly 3D bliss so to speak, wouldn't you also make the suggestion or utter the wish, that that moment would last forever? One can sympathise with Peter. 'For us to be here is good', is beautiful, he stammered! 'Let us build three huts.' Peter is saying, let us preserve this state, let us make this permanent. Let us reside here. I don't want to leave this place and this state!

• But, God the Father knew better. Through a cloud, just like at Sinai and at the Baptism of Jesus, He spoke a similar word as at the Baptism of Christ: "*This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.*" Listen, for once, Peter! Listen to Jesus, dear disciples of Christ! He is going to tell you all about the suffering and death, about His resurrection which is necessary to restore all things! This needs to happen, so that

what you have seen now will be your reality, forever, in His final coming, in full outer glory, on the Last Day.

- Immediately after the transfiguration experience Jesus sheds more light on the promise concerning Elijah, that he must come *first* to restore all things. Jesus reveals that Elijah has come, namely John the Baptist, the same type as Elijah. But what about the restoration of all things, which he had to do first. Jesus says [13] “*and they did to him whatever they pleased!*” How can suffering and death be restoration of all things? What happened to John will also happen to Jesus, must happen to Him. This is God’s way of bringing about the restoration of all things.
- Now, remember that John’s ministry is part of the beginning of the Gospel! That is, the restoration of all things, that promise given to Elijah, has already begun. At that stage it was going full on! Jesus sheds light on the way God would restore all things, namely through death and resurrection!
- This is the conversation we have in the Scriptures, taken to us every Sunday, as we hear OT and NT passages read to us, parallel to one another, and the sermon should enfold this conversation further and apply it to us and answer our questions.
- Both the writings of Moses and the prophets on their own accord have no eternal light and beauty in them. If you take Christ out of them, His death and resurrection, the light goes off! Only in the radiation of Christ, only in the light of Christ, only reading and understanding the OT Scriptures from Christ’s fulfilment in His death and resurrection *are* they fully God’s Word.
- That is exactly what God the Father confirms: “*.. Listen to HIM!*”
- Very significant on so many levels. True light, beauty, truth and understanding of God’s Will has to come from Christ. In fact, that is what heaven is all about, that Moses and Elijah will not speak a word on their own. Christ gives the right meaning!
- In other words, true light and beauty in the heavenly realms is only to be experienced in conversation with Christ, being united with Him. A human being can only truly be light and beautiful when being united with Christ!
- What a beautiful and peaceful place, heaven, being with Christ. No strife, no fighting over words, conversation, no disputation- do you wish to be there? But, we

cannot stay here for very long. Why can't we stay here on the mountaintop, listening to the conversation of Jesus with the Torah and the prophets? Jesus has already fulfilled death and resurrection for us and for all people.

☪ God says, listen to Jesus. Jesus says, proclaim this Good news to all people. The exceptionally Good News that there is such a place where Moses, Elijah and Jesus are in conversation with one another, where the whole of the OT Scriptures make sense from the viewpoint of Christ and that by receiving Christ, by hearing Him and being united with Him one becomes part of this new place!

☪ In this regard, we need to realise one last thing, for today: When John, James and Peter with Jesus joined the rest of the disciples in the village, guess what did they find [Mk 9,14]: *“And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them.”* Down in the village they have to face arguing, no conversation, but disputes over Moses and Elijah and Jesus. That is simply the reality of proclaiming the Good News in this world. We won't get away from arguments and disputes over Scripture, neither in the world nor in that part of the Body of Christ, which we call the battling church.

☪ And Jesus didn't hold back the truth. He proclaimed it and confessed it whether it caused further arguments or even led so far that they decided to have Him killed. Jesus sends us into the world- we are going to face arguments- nevertheless, He wants us to engage with the people outside the Body of Christ, publicly and in private, and confess the wonderful truth we know and believe exists! How can we keep it all for ourselves and not share it with especially those who are longing for a good, meaningful and deep conversation about what truly makes us human, beautiful and peaceful and content human beings!

☪ You know such people. Young or older ones, speak to them. Many need and desire to hear the pure Gospel. Make use of the opportunities God places in front of you, because we know *this* wonderfully restored place exists already. Jesus, Moses and Elijah are alive! What a magnificent beautiful Body to be a member of! To God be the glory! **Amen.**

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. (RSV Eph 3,20-21).