

March 2, 2025

The Glory of God

Exodus 34:29-35; Luke 9:28-36

“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”

Today marks the last Sunday after the Epiphany, during which we observe the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Transfiguration is the moment when Jesus was transformed in appearance, revealing His glory just before His journey to the cross. This event serves as a meaningful bridge between the Epiphany season and Lent. It represents the climax of Epiphany, showcasing Christ’s glory, and prepares us for Lent, when Jesus travels to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord is a significant event, but one might wonder why. What is the significance of Jesus undergoing such a transformation? What does it symbolize, and why does it warrant its own festival? To address these questions succinctly, the Transfiguration of Our Lord holds importance as it provides a preview of the conclusion of the story of Jesus. Knowing the outcome can sometimes be crucial, as it offers encouragement to persevere in one's journey.

This brings to mind a story told of the renowned distance swimmer Florence Chadwick. Among her many other accomplishments, she was the first woman to swim across the English Channel both ways. In 1952, she set out to become the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the mainland of California, a swim of over 20 miles. She stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean on a foggy, chilly day, determined to accomplish her goal. She swam for more than fifteen hours in a fog so dense she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. But after fifteen hours, she was ready to quit. She asked to be taken out of the water. In a boat alongside her, her mother told her she was close and assured her she could make it. But Florence was physically and emotionally exhausted. She stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she realized that the shore was less than half a mile away. Florence said at a news conference the next day, *“All I could see was the fog... I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.”*

It's remarkable what we can endure when we know it will end, especially when we know for sure how much longer it will be. Seeing the shore can make the difference between continuing to swim and giving up.

Transfiguration offers us a glimpse of the shore. We celebrate this great miracle today as God's way of showing Jesus and his closest disciples what lies ahead. It serves as encouragement for them before they descend the mountain and journey to Jerusalem, reminding them how the story will ultimately conclude by revealing the shore.

This miracle can also inspire us in the same way. **It provides a vision of the day when we will all be transformed into heavenly glory.** Just before we enter the Season of Lent, we are given a preview of Easter. This glimpse can empower us to confront our sins and challenges, just as it did for Jesus and his closest disciples.

This miracle is significant in the gospels and in Jesus' journey with his disciples. Just eight days before ascending the mountain, Jesus revealed to his disciples for the first time what was about to happen, which was completely unexpected for them. He informed his disciples that it was time for him to go to Jerusalem—to suffer, to be rejected by the chief priests, and to die, only to be raised on the third day.

This was not surprising to us, but it certainly was to the disciples. This was not what they had expected to happen at all. We know the ending; we've read the story. However, they were living through it, and the ending had yet to be experienced, much less written down.

So, eight days after this puzzling conversation, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and went up to a mountain to pray. An incredible miracle occurred while they were at the top of the mountain—for both Jesus and his disciples. While Jesus was praying, his appearance changed. He was transfigured, at least briefly, into his post-Easter appearance. He transformed from the Son of Man into the Son of God in that instant.

For a moment, they all saw through the fog, the uncertainty surrounding them, and the trials of the cross and crucifixion awaiting them. They caught a glimpse of the shore and saw, if only briefly, the heavenly glory that was coming.

With this understanding, we can leave our worship service today with a firm conviction that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, the true Son of God. We can depart today better prepared to enter the season of Lent—a season of preparation that begins with Jesus walking into the valley of His suffering and death on the cross but ultimately concludes with the mountaintop experience of resurrection.

As we transition from Epiphany to Lent, moving from the Mount of Transfiguration to Mount Calvary, it's important to remember a key thought: Jesus of Nazareth faced a wide range of life experiences, just like we do. He endured the deepest and darkest valleys, including the crucifixion on the cross. To truly grasp the significance of Jesus' suffering and death in our lives today, we must recognize that He triumphed over those valleys and ultimately ascended to the mountaintop.

The glorious vision of our Savior, described in our text today, assures us that one day we will witness what the disciples experienced while with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

May God grant to every one of us that through our faith in Jesus Christ we may one day be able to say with Peter, Lord, it is good for us to be here. Let's build a house and let us stay! Amen