

## ***Sermon***

### ***Transfiguration of a Christian Life***

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Today is Transfiguration Sunday – Transfiguration is a strange word – one you don’t hear very often. It means a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. The Gospel of Luke explains what happened on that mountain top with Jesus and Peter, John and James...

#### **Luke 9:28-36**

#### **The Transfiguration**

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,<sup>[b]</sup> they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[c]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen;<sup>[d]</sup> listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found

alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

When we read this scripture, we get a rare glimpse into the divine – into what the Kingdom of heaven may look like, may feel like. In both this scripture and in the Old Testament scripture, we witness what happens to us – how our Spirit becomes transformed – when we are within the presence of the divine, when something has happened and we know it was God who was present in that event, that conversation, that embrace. We can't explain it, but we know. And we want to hold onto these moments because the world we live in, at times, is overwhelming and dark – difficult and painful. Today we watch horrifying pictures of bombing in Ukraine, taking over this country by an over- powering madman. For me, it immediately took me back to my childhood, much of which was spent worried about nuclear bombs as we constantly lived during that history known as The Cold War. On those days, living through times like this of seemingly sudden unrest in our world, these scriptures help remind us that God is a God of love and freedom, peace and justice, wholeness and fullness of life for all. That when we come broken, God can turn us into something so beautiful that the light coming from our being is so bright, it must be covered by a veil. Understanding the world we now live in trying to learn to live with COVID and now live with leaders who impose and kill for their own gain, our trip back down the glorious mountain we read about here and into the foothills of daily life can be incredibly hard. Paul commends this community in Corinth to great boldness, especially in regard to speech. Today, we are so concerned about offending that bold speech might be hard to come by.

This is a tall order in a world that leans away from God in so many ways. To speak with confidence the words of Christ can be difficult and fall on deaf ears. Paul does not provide a brochure or text we should repeat or even how to get people's attention – rather Paul speaks of how we should be transparent about our faith – in all situations. Perhaps talk about church and how important it is to us as we navigate through this world of unrest. Share how our faith gets us through dark days and helps us feel love and joy in its fullest form. The reality is – the boldness Paul is speaking of is to remove the veil from our faces. To allow people to see God in our eyes.

We practice this in worship. We come together, invited to confess our sins before God and one another. Confessing our sins is bold speech, and hearing sweet words of forgiveness constitutes bold listening. As we acknowledge our spiritual blindness and turn toward God, Paul assures us that God is present in this very turning. This turning also leads us to experience the freedom and transformation of the Christian life. The trip down from the mountaintop is not all sweat, aching muscles and disappointment. For Paul and for Christians throughout the ages, the trip down includes clearer vision, glimpses of God's glory more fully revealed and the freedom to speak boldly.

Without this practice of confession and worship as a faith community, we may listen only to our own inner voice, believing it to be God's voice and shutting out others. Standing in the divine presence for Moses meant that others would notice the glow on the face of Moses before he became aware that he looked

different to them. Moses didn't immediately understand why the people were afraid of him, of the altered way he looked. As he did, he altered his approach.

This communication and willingness to change informs and reforms the spiritual life of a congregation. It encourages trust and enables ways of being accountable to the Holy One and to one another.

Our lives and our world can indeed be changed – and we can climb back up that mountain to reach that world of love and peace we hear in our scripture when we are able to work together, listen to each other and encourage one another through worship and fellowship. When we look up to God, whether we know it or not, our faces shine.

Amen