

Transfiguration Sunday

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How are our lives being transfigured by God?

I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Today we celebrate the last Sunday after Epiphany, the Transfiguration, another word we don't often use in our language, unless we are describing of course the colour of our whites on wash day!!!!

In verse two, we hear, "Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them."

I checked on the word transfiguration, to refresh my own understanding mostly and the dictionary said: "A great change of form or appearance, especially a change that beautifies, glorifies, or makes more spiritual. And, "a Christian festival celebrating Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain as witnessed by three of the disciples.

One of the commentaries I was reading called the Transfiguration, "a mysterious episode traditionally known as the Transfiguration".

The Transfiguration is the second of the three scenes in which Jesus is declared to be the Son of God. The first scene is following Jesus' baptism by John the Baptism in the river Jordon, we hear God's voice acknowledging Jesus. The second is the Transfiguration and the third took place immediately after Jesus' death on the cross, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom and as Jesus breathed his last breath. The centurion says, "Truly this man was God's Son".

Just speaking these words brings a sense of awesomeness. You can imagine God's thundering voice announcing to the world this remarkable truth. It really makes me stop and think that this Transfiguration is indeed a mysterious episode, something completely out of our scope of understanding.

No wonder the disciples, Peter James and John were totally amazed and why Peter wanted to stay in this incredible space. That's why he suggested to Jesus that they build three dwellings, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah, as an attempt to prolong this wonderful experience indefinitely by providing places where the three heavenly figures might dwell.

Peter just didn't know what to say, they were all terrified and I can understand why.

I find the whole experience totally amazing as well, especially as the cloud overshadows them and from the cloud comes a voice. What might we have thought or said? I would probably have been

speechless, without words, which is unusual for me and definitely unusual for our precious Rev Mel ❤️. (Oh, did I say that out loud).

The Transfiguration follows Jesus' first announcement that he is to suffer and die, a statement that the disciples again struggle with, how can this happen, they found it difficult to believe these words, thinking this would be the end, however it is indeed a new beginning.

The Transfiguration is a revelation of Jesus' full identity made to Peter, James and John, the inner group of three disciples who have seen his power over death displayed in the raising of Jairus' daughter, these disciples who will later witness Jesus' anguished wrestling with the "cup" that lies before him at Gethsemane.

The disciples experienced the revelation of Jesus on the mountain, but they did not understand it. As readers we will watch them in this new phase of their halting journey from blindness to some measure of vision. Sounds just like us as we reflect on Jesus' journey and so often we find His path difficult to navigate as we try to experience his divinity shining through his humanity.

As I meander along following my Jesus, sometimes the path is wide and straight, other times the path is narrow and extremely mountainous. I don't do mountains so well these days and just as I think that I have a reasonable understanding of Jesus' life and his purpose for me, there is a twist or a turn and I think, right, what does this mean!!

I'm guessing a few of us are reading Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, as suggested by our fearless leader, and here we find tools that enable us to move forward with a sense of understanding and purpose. We must keep things simple.

On the one hand it is good to reflect on the hard bits of Scripture as we grow our relationship with Jesus, to examine the truths that we find difficult to grasp, as this does lead to a deeper connection with God. And it is important to travel the road together and share our interpretations, both of Scripture and life in general, our collective worship is just as important as our personal encounter with Jesus.

So, let's keep this journey simple, don't overthink things and remember the basics, Love God and love one another, all shall be revealed in God's good time.

Love is the secret here. Know that you are loved by God no matter what, I guess he is often disappointed by our behaviour, but he still loves us with a love that is deep and unconditional.

Here I am trying to keep things simple, but how do we as mortals understand a love like this?

I guess God's love for us is similar, possibly more intense, as a parent's love for their child.

Our journey with Jesus also brings about a sense of freedom, do you find that?

Knowing that no matter what happens Jesus is with us, as no one else can be, He stretches out his hand and goes with us to the ends of the earth and into eternal life.

When we suffer pain, Jesus feels our pain and sends angels to comfort us and support us through tough times. Whispering words of peace, compassion and love.

This reality overwhelms me with joy, thanks and praise to my God for the many blessings we are freely given as followers of Jesus.

Rev Mel, at Dinner Church last Tuesday, the first night back after our Christmas break, asked all at the table to reflect on the best thing that happened to them over this break and the most difficult thing that they encountered.

This reminded me of a book I once read and have re-read over the years, It is called, *Sleeping with Bread, Holding What gives you Life*, by Dennis Linn, Sheila Lin and Matthew Linn.

The introduction explained that during the bombing raids of WW 2, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and taken to refugee camps where they received food and good care. However many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves homeless and hungry again.

Nothing seemed to reassure them. Finally, someone had the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, today I ate, and I will eat again tomorrow.

The book goes on to talk about two very important questions:

What am I most grateful for today and for what am I least grateful for today?

These questions help us to identify moments of consolation and desolation. For centuries prayerful people have found direction for their day and for their life by identifying these moments.

The book goes on to explain *The Examen*, a process by which one finishes their day, lighting a candle, becoming aware of God's presence and taking several minutes of quiet time while we ask ourselves these two questions, "What am I most grateful for today and what am I least grateful for today?"

This can be done alone or as a couple or family. This process, The Examen, allows us to reflect on the good and not so good and find God's presence and grace in both.

The good things reveal God's loving kindness and draws us to him with thankfulness, love and praise. The not so good things help us to acknowledge feelings of sadness and pain and how God is speaking through them.

The book is only a small one, however it is full of the author's stories and experiences which encourage us to keep in touch with God and develop our relationship with Him. The book also enables us to understand ourselves better, to learn how to make good choices by listening to the Master's voice and also being attentive to our spiritual journey. A really good read.

As we reflect on this Transfiguration of our Lord, let us think about our own "Transfiguration".

How are we made one with Christ? How are our lives transfigured by God and how does our relationship grow stronger each day as we walk the journey with our Saviour?

Peace be with you. Amen and amen 🙏