



Transfiguration Sunday

How do Christ's ancient churches teach us to be the manifest presence of Christ on earth?

Main Idea:

On Transfiguration Sunday we remember when three of Jesus' disciples caught a spectacular glimpse of Christ's divinity. But, what about now? How is the world supposed to 'see' Jesus and His glory?

That is the role of the Church.

As Christ's body, we are called to be the manifest presence of Christ, so that our community can see and experience the glory of Christ's grace, power, love reflected in our lives.

Intro |

Have you ever seen something that totally took your breath away?

No I don't mean because you were winded from exhaustion!

I mean something happened right in front of you, but it was so amazing you had trouble believing it had actually happened. You may have even gasped in astonishment, saying, "Are my eyes deceiving me? I can't believe what I've just seen."

I think many people felt like that as they watched Jesus teach and minister to the masses. Being one of His followers, really must have been an amazingly, spectacular experience. Everywhere Jesus went, He gathered a crowd, who were eager to watch Him teach, heal, and cast out demons.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday, the day we remember when Peter, James and John got the amazing opportunity to catch a glimpse of Jesus in all His glory.

However, the reading we were allocated was an account of a dramatic sight not only seen by Peter, James and John, but by hundreds of people.

Everyone who saw the healing of the man with the leprous hand, and witnessed the paralysed man walk again would have been totally amazed and flabbergasted.

And because such things could only be signs that God was present,

they "... gave praise to God and were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." (Luke 5:26)

When we read about such events in the Bible, many of us think, "Gosh, I would love to have been there that day, to see such amazing sights."

We say this because I think every one of us absolutely loves it when God makes His presence clear and obvious! In fact in some circles when there are an abundance of miracles it is called 'glory days'.

It means that God's glory is able to be seen by everyone around.

Don't we love these occasions? Whether it be due to an answered prayer, or because someone has received healing, we love being 'part of the action' when the Spirit of God moves and we catch a glimpse of the glory of God amongst us.

However, **we** are not the only ones who want to 'see' the power and glory of God.

People in our communities, our neighbours, our fellow club members, our friends and family also want to see evidence of God's presence.

But how will they? How will our community at Southlakes 'see' Jesus and His glory?

Especially if hardly any of them manage to walk through our doors?

There is really only one way: through us!

God designed for the world to see and experience Christ's glory and power reflected through us, His body, the church.

However, the only way Christ's glory will be reflected through us, is when we live as we are called to live, as Christ's living glorious body.

So, today I'd like to do two things.

Firstly, I'd like to recap the seven essential lessons we've learnt from the ancient churches.

I do that so that we can apply these lessons to our lives, so that we fulfill our calling to be the living manifestation of Christ's presence on earth.

Lesson 1 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must love Jesus as passionately as the day we first received salvation.

The first lesson came from the church in Ephesus, which excelled in doctrinal purity and perseverance but had forsaken its first love.

Jesus rebuked them, calling them to return to the love they had at first.

A church that is doctrinally sound but lacks love is like a lamp without oil—completely useless and ineffective.

Jesus calls us to be a people whose love for Him and others burns brightly.

In fact Jesus said our love should be the mark that sets us apart.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

If we truly love as Christ loves us, His glorious love will be obvious to those in our community.

Lesson 2 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must remain faithful despite trials and difficulties, as Jesus did.

We'll remember that the church in Smyrna faced severe persecution, yet Christ encouraged them to remain faithful even unto death.

This reminds us that trials will come, but through them, we have the opportunity to showcase the power of Christ within us.

When the world sees believers enduring suffering with unwavering faith, they catch a glimpse of Christ's strength.

Jesus did not promise a life free from suffering, but He did promise His presence through it. Our faithfulness in adversity is a testimony that Jesus is alive and at work in us.

Lesson 3 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must hold fast to God's truth and reject false or erroneous teachings.

Pergamum was a church that held fast to Christ's name but tolerated false teachings.

Jesus warned them against compromise, because a church that abandons the truth ceases to be a beacon of Christ's light.

We live in an age where truth is often compromised for cultural acceptance.

However, as followers of Christ, we must stand firm in God's Word. Only then will we shine Christ's light in a world darkened by deception.

Lesson 4 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must regard holiness as an essential characteristic of our life.

The church in Thyatira was commended for its love and service but was rebuked for tolerating immorality.

Jesus calls His church to purity because a compromised church cannot reflect His holiness.

Holiness is not about legalism, but about living in a way that reflects Christ's righteousness.

When we pursue holiness, we become vessels through which Christ's glorious presence is seen.

A pure church is a powerful church, shining the beauty of God's holiness to a world darkened due to its alienation from God.

Lesson 5 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must remain alert and awake, resisting apathy and spiritual dullness.

Do you remember Sardis, the dead church? Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but in reality, it was spiritually dead.

This is a sobering warning: outward success does not always mean spiritual vitality.

It is easy for churches to appear vibrant yet lack the Spirit's power.

A church that is truly alive is one that is filled with the Holy Spirit, passionately seeking God, and bearing fruit for His kingdom.

An alive church is one that is regularly testifying that the power of God is at work in our lives.

Remember, our community does not only need to see our 'good works'. They expect that! After all, we are regarded as 'good church people'.

If we want to adequately reflect Jesus, our community needs to see the miraculous power of God working through us, and the radical extravagant love demonstrated in how we live.

When we are spiritually awake, our community will see the life and power of Christ flowing through us.

Lesson 6 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must seize the doors of opportunity Christ opens for us, and with courage walk through them.

Philadelphia was a faithful church with little strength, yet Christ set before them an open door that no one could shut. This illustrates that God empowers His church to walk in divine opportunities.

When the world sees a church that moves forward in faith, embracing God's mission, they witness His power at work.

The church must not be passive but should be willing to step out boldly in risky faith through the doors of opportunity Christ opens so that His love and truth is shared with the world.

Lesson 7 | Because the church is called to be the manifest presence of Christ, we must reject all forms of lukewarmness, compromise and mediocrity.

The final lesson comes from Laodicea, a church that was neither hot nor cold—indifferent and complacent. This was the church that nauseated Jesus – we definitely don't want to be like that church!

Jesus called them to repentance, reminding them that He desires a people who are passionate and fully surrendered to Him.

A church that's on fire for Jesus displays His power to the world. If our faith has become dull and lazy, it is our responsibility to stir ourselves up until we are fervent in our faith.

When we are wholly devoted to Jesus, His glorious presence will be unmistakably revealed through us.

Conclusion: The church is called to reflect Christ's glory

Although more than two thousand years ago, hundreds were able to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, today, every person in the world can still see Christ's glory through His church—if we are faithful to our calling.

When we love passionately, remain faithful in trials, uphold God's truth as revealed in the Bible, pursue holiness, stay spiritually awake, walk through the doors of opportunity Christ opens to us, and reject all forms of lukewarmness, we become the manifest presence of Christ on earth.

As John wrote in one of his little letters, "as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world." (1 John 4:17)

Let us commit ourselves to be a church that reflects Christ's presence, so that all who see us may behold His glory and come to know His saving grace.

Let's pray,

Heavenly Father,

We come before you with humble hearts, seeking to be a church that reflects your glory on this earth. Lord, just as You spoke to the seven churches in Revelation, we ask that you shape us according to your will.

Help us to love you passionately, never forsaking our first love but always growing deeper in devotion to you. Strengthen us in trials, that we may remain faithful no matter the cost. Keep us grounded in your truth, rejecting compromise and standing firm in your Word.

Purify our hearts, Lord, that we may pursue holiness and walk in righteousness before you. Awaken us spiritually, that we may not be asleep in complacency but alive with the fire of your Spirit. Open doors before us that no one can shut, and give us the courage to step through them boldly, proclaiming your name.

Father, remove any lukewarmness from our hearts. Make us fervent, fully surrendered, and ablaze with passion for you. May our lives be a testimony of your power, love, grace, and forgiveness, that the world may see your glory through us.

We commit ourselves to you, Lord. Fill us with your Spirit and use us for your kingdom. In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.