

Luke 9:28-43 The Transfiguration

Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "**This is my Son, who I have chosen; listen to him.**" When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

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### Commentary on Luke 9:28-43

The transfiguration of Jesus follows immediately (8 days) on the scene where Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah (Luke 9:20).

The event took place less than six months before Jesus was crucified. Jesus had told his disciples many times of his impending death but they did not want to hear it. They would rather hear Jesus tell his parables, his stories of how God punished the wicked and rewarded the good, how Jesus fed and healed the people and raised them and from the dead.

It was a tough climb up that mountain, but Peter, James and John felt that if they want to be the favorites of Jesus they would have to make the climb and keep up with him. But once they reached the top, Jesus went on further and began to pray to God while the three lay down for a rest. Their robes, made of thin cotton and bore the dust and dirt of the mountain trail.

When voices awoke them they dusted off themselves off right away and looked for Jesus, but Jesus was praying. His face had taken on a light and began to shine brilliantly and his traveling robe became a dazzling white. Two men joined Jesus in the brilliant light, and the three disciples shivered in fear at the unknown. They knew the faces of Elijah and Moses whose likenesses were well known in the artwork of that day.

Jesus' transformed appearance is not because he is experiencing God's glory (like Moses) but rather because **he is the very source of divine glory**. Luke does not say that Jesus was actually "transfigured" as Mark and Matthew do, but only that his face was altered; along with the other two figures, and says that the clothing of Jesus became dazzling white.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah add to the attestation of Jesus' identity. The two are commonly interpreted as symbolizing the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah).

The disciples had a foretaste, or momentary glimpse of what heaven would be like. It was a moment that could not be preserved but Peter wanted it to be remembered so he suggested that they put up three shelters one for Jesus and one each for Moses and Elijah. The disciples were still half asleep and Peter blurted out the first thing that came to his lips.

“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

But while he was speaking a cloud appeared and enveloped them, the same as led the Israelites out of Egypt. They were afraid.

The voice of God spoke from the cloud as Moses and Elijah disappeared saying, **“This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him.”** And when the voice had spoken, they were alone with Jesus. If the disciples who had Jesus face to face with them had a very difficult time believing what he said, I would venture to say our task is even more difficult.

Today, in the church, we have a celebration of the changing of church seasons. We leave Epiphany where Jesus glory is clearly seen as the Light of the world, God’s own Son. The transfiguration marks the move from the Epiphany season into the season of Lent. During these 40 days before Easter we see Jesus as the Son of man. Jesus’ glory is moved to the background as his humility comes to the foreground.

The disciples kept these events to themselves as they descended from the peak. They did not tell anyone what they had seen on the mountaintop. Why? They came to learn that although there is glory and beauty on the mountaintop, the real work of helping and saving people is done in the valley.

Jesus wants us to come down from the mountain and work in the valley. He wants us to bring a measure of His grace into this world. He wants us to bring his faith into the lives of those around us.