

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Hymns: 126, 135, 37, 36

The INTROIT

(Ps.84:1-2a)

P: The lightnings lightened the world:

C: the earth trembled and shook.

P: How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts:

C: my soul longeth, yea, even faintest for the courts of the Lord.

The COLLECT

O God, who in the glorious transfiguration of Thine only-begotten Son has confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of the fathers, and who, in the voice that came from the bright cloud, didst in a wonderful manner foreshow the adoption of sons, mercifully vouchsafe to make us coheirs with the King of His glory and bring us to the enjoyment of the same; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth, and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 61:10-11 (NKJV)

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.110:1; 96:2,3)

P: Thou art fairer than the children of men:

C: grace is poured into Thy lips.

P: The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand:

C: until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day:

C: Declare His glory among all people. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

2 Peter 1:16-21 (NKJV)

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

Matthew 17:1-9 — “And He Was Transfigured Before Them”

INTRODUCTION

- I. AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM
- II. MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED
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CONCLUSION

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Matthew 17:1-9 — “And He Was Transfigured Before Them”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today is the Festival of the Transfiguration of Our Lord. The appointed Gospel reading is Matthew 17:1-9:

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

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And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Today is the observance of the Transfiguration of Our Lord. This year the season of Epiphany is very, very short and we jump right from the Epiphany of our Lord to the Transfiguration of our Lord. In a way this serves as a reminder of the close connection between the two events in the life of a Christian. For both events are entirely by God’s doing and both events make manifest the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. As the Epiphany of our Lord is the manifestation of God in the flesh, the Transfiguration of our Lord is the opening of our eyes to the fullness of God’s glory in Christ Jesus. Only God can open our eyes to see Him, and this is possible for us only in communion with the body of Jesus.

I. AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

Now after six days. In the verse prior to this, Jesus said, **“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”** After six days, Jesus leads three of those who had been standing there, up a high mountain, where He is transfigured before them so that they see Him in the manner that He is coming in His kingdom. The fullness of the glory of the Son of Man was revealed and the three disciples saw their Lord for who He really is. Six days prior to this Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus told him that this was not revealed to him by flesh and blood, but by the Father of Jesus who is in heaven. As we shall hear again shortly, the Father revealed Jesus yet again in connection with His transfiguration.

Not only did Peter confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, but Jesus praised this confession as the foundation upon which He would build His Church, the foundation for the forgiveness of sins, the foundation that would give such strength and stability to His Church that even the gates of hell could not prevail against it. Then Jesus explained vividly that this foundation is His suffering, death, and resurrection. To this, Peter responded by dragging his Lord aside and scolding his Lord he said, **“Far be it from You, Lord, not ever shall this be to You!”**

Truly the preaching of Christ crucified is the great snare that ensnares even the most stout of believers. For it is wonderful to embrace the God of glory upon whom we rely for our daily bread and our protection and whatever else we hope for. It is pleasing to us to pray to God to reveal Himself to us so that we may praise Him as our great and awesome God. We love to know God as the one who vindicates us against our enemies and rewards us with His righteousness and who is merciful toward us in our weakness. But to look upon this God of glory taking our sin and the sin of the world in His own flesh so as to pour out His blood for us, this we cannot bear to see. This is more than we are willing to behold. We fight against it and imagine that we should know the God of glory and majesty apart from the lifting up of the Son of Man as the one cursed for our sake.

So six days after telling about the means by which our knowledge of God is given, Jesus took three of His disciples with Him to see the glory that is found only in the one who came to take our sin and to carry the judgment of the world. On the sixth day God finished His creation, culminating in the creation of Man. In the image of God created He Man. With the birth of Jesus and the Epiphany of our Lord the image of God was again with Man. Six days after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, six days after Peter fell from God’s grace by denouncing Jesus as the crucified Lord of Salvation, the Lord Jesus is transfigured before them.

II. MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED

It is fascinating to notice that in Luke’s account of the transfiguration that he says regarding this amazing event, **“And came to be after these sayings about eight days. . .”** The world was completed with the creation of Man on the sixth day, with the seventh day hallowed as the Lord’s Sabbath, and with life continuing into a new week on the eighth day. Eight souls were saved from the evil of the days of Noah by means of the water of the great flood that carried the sin of the world away. The testament of circumcision was commanded for the eighth day. Jesus was crucified and buried on the sixth day and rose again from the dead on the eighth day. Does the Holy Spirit mean for us to see a connection between the literal six days that Matthew records and the nearness of the eight days that Luke records regarding the Transfiguration of our Lord before the chosen witnesses? And what is the connection of the appearance of Moses and Elijah to the chosen three witnesses?

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Appeared to them Moses and Elijah. The three witnesses were brought by their Lord to the top of the mountain and suddenly Jesus was transfigured and with the transfiguration of the Lord Moses and Elijah also were seen standing with Jesus and talking with Him. Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus. They said nothing to the three disciples, but only to Jesus. Luke records that they were talking with Jesus about His exodus which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. These two revered prophets of the Old Testament, the two prophets who were known for working great miracles and signs among the people to bring them to repentance and faith, these two stood and talked with Jesus about His suffering and death that He was about to fulfill. This is what Jesus had spoken of and Peter rejected. Is this why Moses and Elijah did not speak to Peter, James, and John, but only to Jesus? Is this not the message that Moses and Elijah proclaimed all along, the message that was being confirmed as the Gospel, the very power of God unto salvation?

What about the names of these two prophets of renown? Moses is “drawn from the water” and Elijah is “my God Yahweh.” Is there a connection with the appearance of these two who appeared with the transfiguration of our Lord to talk about His suffering, death, and resurrection that the disciples previously were unable to hear or perceive? Is there a connection with what Peter would proclaim at Pentecost to those who were cut to the heart and asked “**what shall we do?**” Peter said to them, “**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” Later, in 1 Peter 3:21, he writes, “**Baptism saves us, (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**” In today’s Epistle reading he writes,

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Surely Moses and Elijah, along with all of the prophets of the Old Testament, preach the promise of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Atop the mount of Transfiguration, they spoke of this with Jesus, to confirm for us all that this is our hope of knowing and seeing the glory of God. This is why St. Paul calls Holy Baptism the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit in connection with the appearance of the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man. (Titus 3) This is why the Lord Jesus explained that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he be regenerated, and that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he be regenerated by water and the Spirit. This is why St. Paul wrote to the Romans, “**Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**” (Rom. 6:4)

III. MY SON, THE BELOVED, IN WHOM I HAVE BEEN WELL PLEASED, HEAR HIM

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

On Christmas Day we heard the angelic proclamation: **“Glory in highest places to God, even upon earth peace, in men goodwill.”** Truly these heavenly messengers spoke in accord with the will of the Father who reiterated this message of the glory of God at the Baptism of our Lord and again at the Transfiguration of our Lord. Truly Jesus is the one in whom the good pleasure of God is spoken. Jesus is the Gospel born to us from heaven. Jesus is the Gospel given with power for the sake of the salvation of mankind. Truly Jesus is the one we must hear.

Thus, with Jesus standing in His glory, transfigured for the disciples to see, Moses and Elijah did not speak to the disciples, but to Jesus. And of what did they speak? They spoke with Him concerning His suffering, death, and resurrection.

Is this not what we have inherited through the divine liturgy of the Church? Is this not what we do when we stand in the presence of God where He comes to us to be transfigured before us. We come to the Lord and call upon Him with the words of invocation, **“In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”** Like the three disciples, as we behold His presence we fall on our faces confessing our sinfulness. Like the three disciples we hear Jesus speak to us, **“Arise and be not afraid.”**

Truly this is why the Father says, **“Hear Him!”** For as we hear Jesus, speaking through His Holy Office of the Ministry even today, we hear the one in whom God’s goodwill is spoken. For Jesus is the very Word of God with us. He is the good pleasure of God in men. He is the very glory of God manifested for us. Arise. Fear not. See God as He comes to us and makes Himself known to us. Turn to God’s Son, the beloved, and hear Him!

CONCLUSION

Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

Truly Jesus is risen from the dead. Now all is accomplished that was promised for us. Now we are free to proclaim what the three witnesses saw and heard atop the mountain of the Transfiguration of our Lord. Today we come again into the gathering of the saints of all time, gathered to the flesh and blood Jesus who gives Himself for us today, and we declare the glory of God as we proclaim His death until He comes. For we are not like Peter, who was blinded to the

glory of God in the preaching of Christ crucified. We have been baptized so that we are able to see the kingdom of God because we truly have passed through the waters into the promised inheritance. The kingdom of God is among us, as we are gathered unto Jesus in His body. Jesus has fulfilled all things for us so that we rejoice in the presence of God in His Holy Communion. Truly this is a glorious day. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.