

Luke 9:28-36
Jesus Alone
2.14.21

According to the Christian calendar
Today is Transfiguration Sunday.

Today ends the Season of Epiphany
Which began on January 6, the day of Epiphany.

Next week, we move into the Season of Lent.
Beginning Wednesday, February 17
The day they call Ash Wednesday.

The Season of Epiphany, then, is bookended
By the day of Epiphany on January 6
Marking the Wise Men's visit to Bethlehem

And today, the transfiguration of Jesus.

Both events are considered epiphanic.

I know I am getting ecclesiastically technical
But here at West Richmond
We do attempt to follow the Christian calendar.

Epiphany means a sudden, brief revelation or insight
Into something beyond our spatial reality.

The early church considered the Magi's visit as epiphanic.

These Gentile sages traveled from the east to Bethlehem
Sensing something special in Jesus' birth.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is also considered epiphanic.

It was there on the mountain

The disciples, Peter, James, and John

Witnessed a certain radiance

Emanating from Jesus' face and clothing.

They heard the voice of God from within a cloud

Saying the words

“This is my Son, whom I have chosen

Listen to him.”

Peter, James, and John were convinced

They were in the very presence of God.

Peter spoke about it afterwards in one of his letters.

2 Peter 1:16-18 NLT

¹⁶ For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” ¹⁸ We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

An epiphanic moment, Peter never forgot.

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Many of us can give testimony to having an epiphany.

I am not talking about a lightbulb

Lighting up in the brain kind of moment.

It's not like a "ah hah" moment

Like when a hard algebra concept becomes clear.

I am talking about an emotionally-charged experience

A kind of unexplainable moment

When something of the Divine touches you

Something, as the Bible might say, coming from your loins

And not your brain.

Floyd shared with me a moment of epiphany

He experienced here one day many years ago.

From where the choir used to sit, Floyd says, and I quote

In that Benediction moment I witnessed rainbow bands of Light/Love, spring from the hearts of the parishioners, gather on the open palms of Pastor Dave [Miller] (same Benediction you used last Sunday), and ascend in two rainbow light columns (to God). I wept tears of Joy.

My daughter, Darcy, shared a memory

When she was in Young Life in middle school.

When they closed their time together

They gathered into a circle holding hands

And Darcy says she witnessed

The clasped hands glowing

With the light of the Holy Spirit.

My own epiphany came in my thirties

Following an invitation to Communion.

It was not a visible epiphany

It was a feeling of being enveloped by God's love
Which moved me to tears
By the power of God's presence.

At the moment of Epiphany
Jesus became more to me
Than a mascot for the Christian church.

Jesus became a personal Savior.

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These are those moments that confirm Jesus
As more than just an exceptional person.

More than a good teacher
More than a faith healer
More than a good example.

It is in these moments the thin veil
Separating our reality with the other, is lifted

And with great clarity, we see the God of all Creation
Manifested in person of Jesus.

Jesus becomes the centerpiece of faith.

Because God revealed himself in the person of Jesus.

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We see it in our passage today.

The three disciples, Peter, James and John
Weighed down with sleep

Suddenly awakening to Jesus standing
In the company of Moses and Elijah.

Moses and Elijah's presence there is significant.

The presence of Moses represents the Law
And Elijah represents the Prophets.

So here you have the Law and the Prophets
Juxtaposed with Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Old Testament,
The Law and Prophets were the ways
God revealed his will and way.

The disciples witnessed Moses, Elijah, and Jesus
Together on the mountain.

A cloud descends and a voice is heard

35 "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him."

The voice speaks
The cloud lifts
And who is left standing?

Jesus.

Where is the Law and the Prophets?
They have disappeared within the cloud.

The only one remaining is Jesus.

The symbolism here is unmistakable.

The author of Hebrews nails it when he wrote

Hebrews 1:1-3 NLT

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ² And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. . .

³ The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

The Son radiates God's own glory
And expresses the very character of God.

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I remember listening to a cousin's wife
An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

She complained a particular church was too Christocentric.

Honestly, I couldn't quite believe what I was hearing.

And couldn't quite understand
How a Christian church could be too Christocentric.

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The lesson here?

I believe there are two things we learn from this lesson.

They are found in God's spoken word in today's text.

35 This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!

The first lesson is the first part of God's proclamation.

God declares that this person
This Jesus of Nazareth is his Son.

God chooses Jesus to reveal God's true character.

You see Jesus . . . you see God
You know Jesus . . . you know God.

Let's not get bogged down in the 5 W's and 1 H
Who, What, Where, When, Why, or How.

Moments of epiphany can't answer them.
Moments of epiphany doesn't need to answer them.

It is by faith that we believe this to be true.

The first half of this statement proclaims Jesus as Divine
A part of the Holy Trinity
One and the same as the other parts
Expressed in different form.

Secondly, that not only is Jesus God's Son, our Savior.

But that what Jesus said is equally vital for us to know
And equally important for us to follow.

The words of Jesus are life-giving
Life-saving, and life-sustaining.

Jesus said that he is the way, the truth and the life,

His life and ministry vital components of his saving grace
Along with the works of salvation on the cross.

As believers, we are also called to be disciples
Following the way of Jesus
Through his word and example.

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I believe one of the problems in Christianity
Is the emphasis on one of these components
Over/against the other component.

I believe the more theologically conservative person
Over emphasizes Jesus' divinity
At the expense of his humanity.

And the reverse is also problematic.

When believers over emphasize Jesus' humanity
Over/against his divinity
As the more liberal believers do.

We must hold the two perspectives in balance.

The term theologians use for this is *hypostatic union*.

This is the personal union of Jesus' two natures.

According to David Mathis
Pastor of the Cities Church in Minneapolis/St. Paul

Jesus has two complete natures: one fully human and one fully divine. What the doctrine of the hypostatic union teaches is that these two natures are united in one person in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining (mysterious though it be) of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.

If we can hold these two aspects of Jesus in balance
Then we can comprehend the magnitude of his coming.

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Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration
Affirming his divinity.

Throughout the ages people experienced
Moments of epiphany convicting them
Of God in Jesus.

Without these epiphanic events
It is hard to wrap our heads around the truth
Of Jesus being one person with two natures.

But when you do . . .
You will never be the same.

For the same power
That one experiences in moments of epiphany

Is the very same power that lifted Jesus from the grave.

And when Jesus, God's Chosen, speaks
It is with the power and authority God gave him.

And we are to listen

Emulating him as our example of faith and practice.

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And so, on this Transfiguration Sunday
May we see Jesus as he truly is
Fully divine and fully human

And may the glow and radiance of his presence
Fill you with joy and peace the world cannot give
Nor take away
Now and forever.

For this we give thanks.

Let us close this time together
With words affirming our faith.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

He was the Son of God

He was the Son of Man

He came down from heaven

He was born in a stable

Kings came to his cradle

His first home was a cave.

He was born to be a king

He was a child of Mary

He was the greatest among rulers

He was the least among servants

He was loved and honored

He was despised and rejected

He was gentle and loving

He made many enemies

He counseled perfection

He was a friend of sinners

He was a joyful companion

He was a man of sorrows

He said, "Rejoice!"

He said, "Repent!"

"Love God with all your heart."

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

"Don't be anxious"

"Count the Cost"

"Deny yourself"

"Ask and receive"

In him was life

He dies on a cross

He was a historic person

He lives today

He was Jesus of Nazareth

He is Christ the Lord.