

**Shining Faces**  
**A Sermon by Mr. Tom Mason**  
**Sunday February 27, 2022**  
**Transfiguration Sunday**

Exodus 34 :29-35; Luke 9 :28-43

Does anyone here enjoy a good mystery? One of the things that Terry and I really enjoy together is to watch mystery shows on the TV. We like to watch Prime Video, Netflix, and Brit Box. All these platforms offer a vast array of great mysteries. The ones that come from the BBC are our favorites. The character's that make up the fictional shows features, are compelling and life like, and they draw you in. A plot develops, the characters actions and personalities become expanded to a point where it seems you know them personally and where you can predict what is to happen next. And then it does not. A new twist or outrageous turn takes place. You must wait to watch the new episode that is to follow.

Our scripture this morning is all about a mystery. This mystery is the most important mystery of our lives and of our existence. It is a mystery about the mission of Jesus, the source and identity of Jesus and how Jesus becomes the lens with which we try and understand, with our limited human abilities, the revelation of God that connects the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture together.

The scripture from Luke 9 reveals to us in the most vivid way, the identity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It reveals the Vision of Glory, the divine nature of our Lord. It is a revelation to which we confess in the Apostles and Living Faith creeds, but the mystery is not yet complete.

In this incredible chapter from the Gospel of Luke, the mystery picks up pace and some key points in the story begin to emerge.

Jesus has sent out the twelve disciples into the world giving them the power to heal, Herod and the authorities do not know what to make of Jesus, Herod had tragically killed John the Baptist, despite this, the crowd think Jesus may be John the Baptist or Elijah. Jesus has demonstrated an incredible miracle, that of feeding 5,000 people at Bethsaida from just five loafs of bread and

two fishes. Peter has recently confessed Jesus true identity. "*But who do you say that I am?*" Jesus asks, Peter responds "*The Christ of God.*" (Luke 9:20).

Jesus has also now told the disciples that he must suffer and be rejected by everyone, that he will be killed and that he will rise again on the third day, and that they are to tell no one. (Luke 9:21-22)

The disciples cannot bear to hear these awful things that were about to happen.

The mystery continues as Jesus tells them more, that there is also a cost to following him. If they are to take- up their own crosses and follow Jesus, they must first "*deny themselves*", "*for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*" (Luke 8: 23-27). There is a personal cost for each one of us to pick up the cross of Christ.

The mystery plot is not following their plan or expectation. The disciples cannot grasp what Jesus is teaching, as the full prophecy of Holy scripture has not yet fully come to bear, and the mission of Jesus not fulfilled.

This is where the story continues about 8 days latter (according to Luke) as Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up on the mountain top to pray. When Jesus prays things happen. The appearance of his face just like the appearance of Moses face in the Old Testament reading from Exodus, changes, it shines in the presence of God's majesty.

Both Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. They are sharing a conversation about the Glory of God, which is the completion of Jesus mission to Jerusalem and the messianic promise and prophecy of the Bible. They speak of Jesus's departure from earth to heaven. From mortal life to death, from death to eternal life. From human flesh to the divine in Gods kingdom, both here on earth and in heaven.

The presence of Moses and Elijah connect us as Christians with the Old Testament Hebrew past, as well as with the promised future for all creation, which is God's reign, the full revelation of the Bible. The presence of Moses reminds us of the past, the saving of the people from Egyptian slavery and their deliverance to the promised land as recorded in the books of the Torah and a shared communal responsibility to observe the statutes and ordinances of Moses, given by God at Mount Horeb (Mt Sinai). Elijah is the prophet who

will one day turn the people's hearts back to the covenant (Mal 4:5-6) and in Jewish thought he is associated with the end of times.

Jesus clothes become a dazzling brilliant white. The Glory of Jesus shines through this story, which illuminates and highlights his very divine nature. In the same way Moses face shone in the Exodus passage with the old covenant given by God, Jesus shines as our new covenant, a new gift to all of creation from our God. The three sleepy disciples almost missed this encounter with the divine, not only had they not understood or taken seriously Jesus' teachings about his suffering, the cost of the cross and the identification of Jesus, as the divine son of God.

Without these parts of the story, they could not understand or interpret the mission of God, they could not be transformed through this sacrifice from God -*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"*(John 3:16).

Peter, James and John, scramble around offering to build shelters for the two prophets and Jesus. Imagine the limitations that they are placing on God and that of the divine? The creator of heaven and earth has no need of a man-made shelter. This description shows the fallibility, the lack of understanding and of faith from these men. At this time, they simply cannot understand what they have seen. Jesus' changes and transforms, from mere flesh to that of the divine. The disciples have not yet.

The scripture of Luke records that God offers a rebuke. *"This is my son, whom I have chosen, Listen to him"* (Luke 9:35).

The three disciples after all of this and even after being in the presence of God, fail to see the plot of the mystery coming together. The fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures, in Jesus Christ. They have not changed they are not transformed through the power of Christ. When the clouds lift, Moses and Elijah are gone, Jesus stands alone. The disciples kept silent and told no one about what had taken place.

Do we as Christians accept transformation in our own lives. Do we see the presence of the Holy Spirit moving around us working for good in unexpected ways? Do we embrace the love and redemptive mission of Jesus in all that we do? Or do we keep silent and not share this with others?

Jesus, Peter, John, and James, just like Moses come back down from the mountain top. On their return they are confronted by “the crowd” and they find a father and a child gasping for life. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit from the boy, Jesus heals the boy and returns him to the father.

Though the disciples saw the transfiguration, they still struggle to understand. They continue to fail with their faith in the divine. They fail to bring healing and wholeness to a child. They could not bring peace or reconciliation between the anguished father and his only son.

There is a relational dimension to a Christian faith that transforms and shapes us through a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ. It is one that nurtures us in our Christian community and beyond, a foundation where we practice relationships of kindness and justice towards everyone we may encounter. It can be personal transformational change that is visible to others

It is through a discipleship in Jesus Christ that we undergo this shift, a change, a transformation as people, which is reflected as our behavioural actions to others, and as an activity of participating in God’s reign in the world. It is Christ’s church on earth at work.

The disciples had not yet undergone this change. They had not yet fully embodied the gospel promise and teaching, this is why Jesus rebuked them. They have not fully embraced a change in how they saw or perceived Jesus.

Perhaps the scripture this morning asks us more questions:

- Do we see Jesus as a transforming power of reconciliation, one of healing and peace?
- Is Jesus at the center of our lives and faith?
- Do we see a need for tabernacles and shelters, or do we see something more?
- Do we stay silent and tell no one of our faith?
- When we leave church this morning, does Jesus come with us?
- Do our faces truly shine with the good news and transforming power of Jesus Christ?

The mystery continues.