

"Healing"
by Rev. Frances Savill
March 2, 2025
Transfiguration Sunday

Luke 9:28-36

There is a lot to hold together this morning. There is the amazing revelation on the mountain, but it happens on our way to Lent and the cross.

This morning is Transfiguration Sunday. St. Thomas Aquinas said: that Jesus' features were not changed during the transfiguration, instead, he says there was an addition of brightness. "Our Saviour didn't lose substance but shewed forth the glory of His own and of our future resurrection."

Someday we're going to look like Jesus.

In the previous scene in Luke's gospel, Jesus was asking his disciples who the crowd thought he was. The disciples answered that some thought Jesus was Elijah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked what they believed. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. Jesus then goes on to tell them that he will suffer many things and be killed.

Next Jesus tells them that if they want to be his followers they must "deny themselves take up their cross and follow him. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Jesus and for the gospel will save it."

Then we have this unexpected trip up the mountain on the eighth day, which is resurrection day.

You may have noticed that the baptismal font is 8 sided. It is a sign of the new life, the new creation, the promise of resurrection, where we die a death like Jesus in baptism that we might experience a resurrection like his also.

Jesus and his disciples have been roaming around the villages of Caesarea Philippi, along the valleys and plains, in the midst of people, the opposition, the needs.

On the eighth day Jesus takes us with Peter, James and John, for a hike, to gain a new perspective – to see what we can't see from the valley.

This is the mountain of revelation, the mountain of transformed vision, the mountain of true seeing, resurrection vision. What changes is not so much Jesus, but our perception of him. Our vision changes, we see Jesus for real.

In the transfiguration the holy transcendence and victorious divinity of Christ are exalted and proclaimed. Glory, changed from the inside out, the truth, Jesus is God's beloved Son. Moses and Elijah suddenly appear.

Who is Jesus? He is not a prophet or Elijah, as some of the people thought. But Moses and Elijah stand with and testify to Jesus.

Elijah, zealous for the glory of God, never tasted death, but he appeared standing before his Lord. Moses, the Law giver, who brought God's people together, and helped to form them, stood before Jesus, who will defeat death.

The disciples were filled with awe and wonder. It was Peter's hope and expectation that the new age was being inaugurated from where they stood. He was ready for the everlasting festival of booths, the party without ending, to begin, the new age rolling down from the mountain, God's kingdom arriving in glory.

A cloud overshadowed them, the voice of God spoke, "this is my beloved Son, listen to him" The cloud lifted. Only Jesus remained.

The invitation was to remember what was seen and heard, and known and revealed by God on the mountain as the truth, as they made their way back down the hill.

What they saw on the mountain was the whole truth, the part that is often hidden from our eyes. It's not that the mountain top shows something new, but rather it shows what is always true, just not always visible to our eyes.

Tom Long says, "The (early church) community would surely have recognized the parallels between themselves and Jesus. If Jesus' ministry experienced rejection, failure, and violence, so did theirs. Down in their own valley, all they could see was their life and hope slipping away. But up on that mountain they could see themselves in Jesus' light. They could see their own baptismal garments dazzling like the sun, see the cloud of God's care hovering over them, hear God calling them "beloved." Once again they could trust the promise that "those who lose their life for my sake and the sake of the gospel, will save it."

Transfiguration Sunday is always the Sunday before Lent, before we begin our journey towards the cross.

Lent is the time when we struggle to accept an unpalatable truth: growth toward victorious living comes through trial and sacrifice. (Stanley S. Harakas) There is no resurrection without the cross.

The vision on the mountain shows us the glory of Jesus, our exalted Lord, the truth that he is God's beloved Son, and those truths continue as they descend the mountain, back to the crowds, the persecutions, the trials, the suffering and death.

Jesus lives out the meaning of his Sonship in the valley of the shadow of death, and all the way through death to his glorious resurrection.

We are also being changed, as we do listen to Jesus, as we fix our eyes on him, and figure out today what it means to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Jesus and for the gospel will save it."

But don't lose sight of what we have seen and heard and what was revealed to us on the mountain top about Jesus our reigning, glorified Lord, nor about

ourselves who in Christ are also counted as God's beloved and are becoming fitted for glory.

How do we remember and hold on to this?

Some of you need some mountain time, whether it's a walk in Laurier Woods, or close the door to the bathroom and soak in the tub or do a Lenten study. You need silence, time away, time to hear God.

That does not mean cramming in one more thing into an over packed schedule. Instead of playing a game on your computer or iPad, phone, or platform of choice. Give that up for Lent and spend the time with God. Instead of binge watching the news, or doom scrolling on your phone, or even your favourite shows, turn them off, be quiet before God in prayer, and in reflection.

We need to "listen to him". We must be deeply attentive to Jesus- to learn his ways, to be led by his Holy Spirit, to fix our eyes firmly on him – without distraction, without wavering.

That is God's invitation to us today as we come to our Lord's table, as we journey together through Lent, towards the cross, and on through to the new life, and to the party that will not end.

Thanks be to God!