

# Sermon for February 7, 2016

## Transfiguration Sunday

### “Seeing Jesus”

Luke 9:28-36

It is amazing what a difference a week can make. There have been times in my life when something important weighed on my mind every waking moment and even entered my dreams. A week that seemed to go on forever. Perhaps it was a great loss or a crisis that stuck with me. A time when the future seemed even more unclear than usual or things I thought I understood no longer appeared to make sense.

Luke’s account of the Transfiguration begins, “About 8 days later.” Both Matthew and Mark begin the same story with the phrase “After 6 days.” So the first thing that three Gospel writers want us to know about the Transfiguration is that it happened about a week after. But after what?

In all three Gospels the event that immediately precedes the Transfiguration is Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Let me remind you of the story. It went something like this: Jesus said to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, “Who do people say that I am?” So all the disciple pulled out their smart phones and began Googling “Jesus of Nazareth.” One found a web site that said that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life. One found a twitter feed, #WholsJesus, where others said he was Elijah. One disciple found a blog that argued that Jesus was one of the other prophets of old come back. Then Jesus said, “Put your phones away. What about you? Who do you say that I am?” After a silence Peter said, “You are the Christ the Son of God.”

Jesus said “You’re right! Now, don’t you dare tell anyone.” Jesus explained, “The plan is that the Son of Man must suffer. He will be rejected and die then rise on the third day. Anyone who wants to follow me must be ready to endure the same. You have to be ready to sacrifice yourselves, even your lives, for the kingdom.”

For about a week those words sunk in to the hearts and minds of Peter and the disciples. What had they gotten themselves into? They thought the Messiah would rule Israel like King David. As people who had gotten in on the ground floor, they thought they would rule with him. But now they had to deal with the idea that they would not reign but suffer! They believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but they could not see how what Jesus said could be true.

After about week of this pondering, it happened. Jesus led Peter, James, and John, a representative three, up the mountain to pray. While there Jesus was transfigured, the glory of God shined around him as it had shone from Moses after he received the 10 commandments on Mt. Sinai. As they looked Jesus was standing there with Moses and Elijah, and they were talking about his journey to Jerusalem. Befuddled by the scene Peter blurted out: “This is awesome, let’s build three chapels and people can make a pilgrimage here and we can set up a concession stand there and a gift shop over there.” Then a cloud of God’s glory overshadowed them and interrupted Peter’s plans saying, “This is my Son, whom I have Chosen, listen to him.”

They told no one about it at the time; I mean who would have believed them? They barely believed it themselves.

Sometimes in life it is hard to see God's plan. We think we know what is going on, then life throws us a curve ball. Like Peter we have trouble seeing what is going on. Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah the Son of God. Then Jesus radically redefined what that meant. He and the other disciples must have had trouble coming to terms with that and what Jesus said about the Son of Man. Would he rule Israel, or be killed? Would they reign, or suffer?

Then Jesus gave them a vision of Glory. One they really couldn't understand at the time. Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, standing on the same footing with Jesus. And Jesus glowing with Divine glory.

But then God cut through all the theological and emotional noise and said, "Listen to him."

We have been baptized into Christ. We have been called children of God. In our baptisms God claimed each of us as Children. We are the adopted children of God. What does that mean for us? It means we follow the only begotten child of God: Jesus.

Do you remember when the "What Would Jesus Do?" craze got started up again? You know with the WWJD bracelets and everything? I was in seminary and one of my professors summed it up. He said, "What would Jesus do? He would die!" That's what Jesus did! He died as a sacrificial lamb for us. Of all things Jesus did, that was the biggie.

If we are going to act like baptized and adopted children of God that means we will follow him. Just as he took up a cross, we have to take up our crosses. Sometimes that's hard to swallow. We are trying to live right and justly and we are told we are called to suffer and not called to privilege. But that's who we are as people baptized into Christ.

When things don't make sense; when life throws us a curve ball, we can look to Christ. When the unfathomable happens and the unthinkable comes to pass, Jesus is still the Christ the Son of God and we can look to him. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God but it is not always clear how that defines our actions. It may be unclear how we should respond to life's difficult questions. Jesus is the Messiah the Son of the living God and sometimes it is unclear how that relates to how we should act, but in those times we can listen to him. We can look and see the glory of God and trust that Jesus will lead us through the trials of life.

Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. Now looking to Jesus will not make everything clear. The disciples still could not comprehend what Jesus was doing. That comprehension only came after it was all over. But they could get through it because they were looking to Christ.

When life is difficult and you can't see the way ahead clearly. Look to Jesus the Son of God. See his glory. Listen to him.