

Sermon for March 3, 2019
Transfiguration Sunday
“Knowing God: Transfiguration”

Exodus 34:29-35

Luke 9:28-36

Today’s sermon is the last in the series “Knowing God.” We have seen God in the visit of the Magi. We have known God in Jesus baptism and his calling to ministry. We have experienced God in the love of God and in God’s generosity. Today we go to the mountaintop to see and know God in Jesus’ transfiguration.

Have you ever known someone who glows? You know what I mean. One of those people who always seems to radiate energy and life. Sometimes they are energetic people who are always active. Other times they are quiet peaceful people. Either way they are radiant.

Such people radiate life and energy and peace. That is the way I understand the transfiguration. “Transfiguration” literally means a change in appearance. When Jesus went up the mountain his appearance was changed. It was as if he glowed with the fire of God and his disciples saw him in a new light. When we speak of “the transfiguration” we are usually speaking of the incident with Jesus we read about in Luke, but Moses was transfigured too. The Bible says that when he came down the mountain his face glowed. In fact it scared the people. In a way this glowing was a validation and confirmation to the people that Moses had truly spoken with God.

How does this happen to a person? How can we be transfigured? How can our lives glow and radiate the life and peace of God? These are the questions I want to explore this morning. Then I want to propose a recipe for transfiguration.

Let’s look at Moses first. Moses had been on Mount Sinai receiving commandments from God for 40 days and 40 nights. This is significant! To spend 40 days and nights with someone alone on the top of a mountain you get to know them. In a sense one could say that Moses was close to God. Not just because Moses was on the same mountain top, but because Moses knew God. Exodus says that Moses’ face was shining because he had been talking to God. So Moses wasn’t just near God, he had been conversing with God. In fact he would keep on conversing with God.

The other thing to notice is that Moses came to the people to share what he had heard. It says that Moses didn’t know that his face was shining, but he had something to share with the people. He had the law of God, so he went to the people and shared that law with them. His face had probably not shined at all in the presence of God’s vast glory. It was only when he went into the darkness of the world that he glowed.

For Christmas one year, my sister gave the girls some stars that glow in the dark. They look like ordinary pieces of plastic in the light, but when the lights are off they glow. In the same way Moses probably looked like an ordinary man in the presence of God, but while he was there he soaked up the light of God, and when he was in the dark world he glowed that light for all to see.

Let's take a look at Jesus. Luke tells us that Jesus took three of his disciples up a mountain to pray. It happened while he prayed that his appearance was changed and he glowed. At that moment Moses and Elijah, the representative of the Law and the Prophets, were standing with him talking, and Jesus' disciples saw all this.

As in the case of Moses, the source of the light was God. Jesus was close to his Father and had been praying. The light that he had soaked up during that time of prayer was now being radiated for all to see. The fact that he was talking with Moses and Elijah who represented two major divisions in the Old Testament, showed his intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. He was the Word made flesh; the fulfillment of the law.

It is also important to notice that Jesus was not alone. He had brought some friends with him. Like Moses, he had not gone to the top of the mountain for his own benefit, but for others. Moses had gone to receive the law to give to the people, and Jesus had gone to show God's glory to his disciples.

So how do we achieve transfiguration in our lives? How do we come to glow with the life and light of God so that others in this dark world can see God burning in us? First of all don't seek it for yourself. Don't seek to radiate energy to call attention to yourself. Don't seek after it so that can feel better about yourself. Both Jesus and Moses when up their mounts of transfiguration, not for their own benefit, but to help others. If you just want to look holy, you are going up the wrong mountain. If, however, you truly want to bring God's light to those in darkness, then you are headed up the right mountain.

Secondly, seek to be close to God. Like Jesus pray and like Moses talk with God. Get to know God intimately. This will take time. You will need to study God's Word. You will need to meditate on it day and night. You will need to soak it up so that it becomes a part of you.

Then, once you have soaked up the light of God, you need to go in to the darkness. You can't glow in the presence of God. You have to spend time with God to soak up the light because God is the source. But you will never glow in God's presence because God will always outshine you! You need to go to the world, where it is dark, and let God's light radiate from you.

So here is my recipe for transfiguration:

1. Start with a large helping of humility and an equally large helping of self-sacrifice.
2. Mix together and don't eat the dough, because we are baking this for someone else's benefit.
3. Next place in the presence of God, and allow to bake a very long time.
4. When done, take it out to the hungry people in the world.

Occasionally take the leftovers back to bake in the presence of God, and you will always have enough light and life to share with all you meet.

Try this recipe. Today!