

## **The Blind Side** *(The Transfiguration of our Lord)*

**Text: Exodus 34:29-35**  
**2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2**  
**Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)**

***Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up a hill to pray. While he was praying, his face changed its appearance, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly two men were there talking with him. They were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in heavenly glory and talked with Jesus....***

Let us pray:

We have arrived at the Last Sunday after the Epiphany and we end nearly as we began. All the way back on January 6<sup>th</sup> Isaiah told us to *Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. (Isaiah 60:1)* and the *Wise men from the East* following a shining star leading them to the newly born *king of the Jews* (Matthew 2:2).

This Sunday Moses has talked with God and comes down from the Mountain with the two tablets and *the skin of his face was shining. [Exodus 34:30]* The Gospel of Luke is telling us of the Transfiguration of Jesus as his face changed and his clothes became *dazzling white*.

In the early 1940's, a brilliant New Testament scholar by the name of Rudolph Bultmann wrote: *"It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles .... (These are) unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world"*.

Remember Bultmann wrote this 82 years ago. He went on to say, *"Human knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously hold to the New Testament view of the world..."*

In view of today's advanced *science* and *technology* what are we to say about today's Gospel reading of the *Transfiguration of Jesus*. Is this just one of those events in the life of Jesus that Bultmann would say is "*unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world*"?

This strange story, about dazzling white clothes – a conversation with heavenly figures – the appearance of Moses and Elijah – God's voice booming from the clouds – all of this is outside of *our normal experience*.

As I say this, I'm aware that this was way outside the experience of those who witnessed these events first hand. Peter was so impressed by the (*Shekiana of God*) that he wanted the experience to continue indefinitely.

He offered to make shelters for the three heavenly figures – maybe he could sit down with them and over a cup of tea join in the conversation Jesus, Moses and Elijah were having. May be, tell some of his fish stories, the big one that got away. What shall we do with such stories in the Bible that take us beyond *our own experiences*?

- like raising people from the dead,
- the miraculous healing of lepers,
- giving people back their sight and hearing,
- enabling people who are paralysed walk again,
- changing water into wine, and today we heard about of Jesus as he talked with two Old Testament heroes – Moses and Elijah?

Was Bultmann right when he said that these are "*unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world*" and it is no longer possible to "*believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles ...*"? (if may I ask - were the miracles any more understandable in Jesus' time?)

If so, we should therefore skip over texts like we have today and focus on what is real and possible in today's world? To do that would mean believing that miracles no longer happen, including the **Resurrection**. This is outside of *our normal experience*.

There are moments in life, fleeting moments, when the curtain between present and future is pulled back and we see, just for a moment, what tomorrow holds for us. Glimpses, moments that make us stand, even for a moment, peek into the future. The transfiguration of Jesus, which we ponder over today, is also a glimpse into the future.

The event occurs right after Peter's confession. Jesus asks, "*Who do people say that I am?*" Peter gets the question right: "*You are the Messiah.*" Here, standing before them, is the long-awaited Messiah of God. But then, Jesus threw a curve ball by telling his disciples that he "*must suffer many things, and be rejected...and be killed,...*" (Luke 9:22).

It came as a great blow to the disciples to hear that God's Messiah must also suffer and be killed (Luke 9:23-25). They suffered a double shock: Jesus must suffer in order to be obedient to God; they must suffer in order to follow Jesus. "*If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*"

The transfiguration lasted only a moment. It was a glimpse of the future but the future had not yet become the present. The disciples and Jesus went back down from the mountain, back down into the valley where there were sick people to be healed, and disputes among the disciples to be settled, and lots more work to be done.

In the early hours of the morning in August 2006, I was called to Verdun, QC. Hospital intensive Care Unit by the family of a dying woman (*I know this family*). This woman had fallen into a coma for days, relying on life support to keep her alive. The medical staff discussed with the family including me to prepare themselves for the inevitable turning off the machine next day.

The family was upset, her grand daughter objected to the machine being turned off right away. She wanted her grand mother on the machine for more time, as we stood around the bed praying, her grand- daughter boldly prayed that she might get well.

As I prayed, part of me did not think she was going to pull through. I ended my prayer after the 'amen' and blessed her with these words "*kom godt hjem.*" I have

seen many dying people in hospitals, to the naked eyes death was just around the bend I thought, her colour was blue, and was heavily swollen up. I felt she was on her way home to God.

I went home with a heavy heart... thinking death is not pretty. For the next few hours any time the phone rang, I thought to that is it. I visited her every week and on one particular visit to amazement she was sitting up in bed.

As she felt better, she was moved to a regular room and spent three months in the hospital in due course she was discharged and went home. She lived for extra 15 years, she died in October 16, 2021 at the age of 97yrs. Was that just a "good luck"? Or was it one of God's miracles?

*"Teach us to number our days," says the Psalmist, "that we might gain a heart of wisdom"(Ps. 90:12).* Of course, to be able to receive this revelation we must first listen to God speaking to us through the pages of Scriptures. Miracles. .... others might say that it was a coincidence. With the eyes of *faith* we can say that God's hand brought the health of this woman. *This was one of God's miracles.*

When it comes to the unexplainable in our Christian faith, like miracles, we are tempted to reduce our faith to what is *rational* and *understandable*. We feel that modern people just don't accept what is incomprehensible.

The very fact that we are children of God is miracle. In fact, as wonderful as being healed of a sickness or rescued from a tragedy might be, this is a far greater miracle. Martin Luther in the Small Catechism when explaining the work of the Holy Spirit said,

*"I believe that on my own I can never come to Jesus Christ my Lord, or believe in him, no matter how hard I try. But the Holy Spirit has called me to Jesus by the good news about him. The Spirit has led me to know and trust Jesus, made me holy, and kept me in the Christian faith."*

This is the miracle of faith. Our relationship with God, our knowledge and trust, faith that believes that Jesus died *for me*, that he rose from the dead *for me*, is only possible through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in my hearts. It is impossible for any of us to create faith in God.

But as we listen to God through his Word – we become aware of God's judgement on sin, we hear about the miracle of God's grace and how his love *for me* that led to the sending of his Son into this world and then his dying *for me* on the cross. The Holy Spirit creates in us the miracle of faith.

I stood by the bed of one of my parishioners, when I lived in Mission, BC., whose hours in this life were slowly drawing to a close. She was barely conscious, I held her hand, her breathing was slow.

Suddenly her eyes opened wide, and she said, "*Jesus is coming to get me!*" and with that she closed her eyes, and lowly she drifted into eternity. I am aware the sceptics will say that she was hallucinating, that drugs were playing tricks on her mind, may be that could be so.

But I, and those gathered around her deathbed, believed that for a fleeting moment the veil over the future was pulled back for this woman (*Nora*) could see herself in the presence of her Saviour. That's the kind of miracle that God wants to do in our lives.

He wants to give us his miraculous grace – he wants us to receive his powerful and unquenchable love for us. He wants to give us the miracle of forgiveness – to wipe away all the bad that we have ever thought, said, and done. He wants to create in us the miracle of faith. This is not just a once only miracle – but *ongoing* miracle.

I could go on and on and on, but take the miracle of (Conversion) *baptism* for example. The more I meditate on the meaning of my *conversion* and all that God has done for me by making me his child, giving me forgiveness, and a place in his heavenly home, the more I am amazed at what God has done and continues to do for me.

(By the way, I made my reservation in God's kingdom in July 1969 and I know one of these days when my time on this earth is over and shed off this earthly mantle, I will head to my heavenly home with out a shadow of doubt. Remember I have my reservation, in 'Jesus Christ') Have you?

My life is changed because God because God made possible and God has promised to always be there when I go through my trials, tribulations, and troubles in

life. For God to make this kind of promise to an unworthy person like me is an amazing miracle. This is outside of *our normal experience*.

We come here to worship, and we hear the Word of God. We are confronted with this peek into the future. In some small way every time we hear God's Word, celebrate the Eucharist, the veil over the future is pulled away, and for a moment we see the glory of the Lord, his will for our lives and our place in his family.

Can those glimpses into the future help and encourage us along the way? I believe they can! When we go back to the valley, to a very ordinary humdrum week, we are strong, because for one shining moment, we have seen (*Shekiana of God*). The curtain between the *present* and the *future* is pulled back and we know the future as if it were now.

When we walk out the doors of this church, the world may not look as pretty or sound as glorious as it does in here. It will be an ordinary, rather cold, February day out there, down there, in the valley, with nothing visibly different from when we came in.

The mountaintop experiences – the dazzling clothes, the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the booming voice from heaven, - this may not be a common occurrence in our lives. But far more important and far more impressive is the miracle of *forgiveness* and a *renewed relationship* with God through Jesus Christ.

Can “anyone seriously hold to the New Testament view of the world of spirits and miracles? The testimonies of the saints speak for themselves, the miracles recorded in the New Testament changed people's lives over the centuries beginning with the disciples, some died for what they believed to be true (*and were fed to wild beasts*), lastly it has changed me in 1969.

As we leave the season of Epiphany let us carry the (*Shekiana*) glory of the Transfiguration with us to not lose heart during the weeks of Lent ahead. As we reflect on our faith, our lives, our repentance, we seek the new radiance of Christ's Resurrection.

To paraphrase Julia Ward Howe's poem that became the Battle Hymn of the Republic: ***“In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory***

***in His bosom that transfigures you and me. As He died to make us holy, let us live to make all free, with Christ we're marching on."***

Let us lift the veil that we use to hide Christ's shining glory within us and light up the world we live in! **Amen.**

**Let us pray:** O Christ, Transfigured, draw us by Your Light and Love to obey God's command to listen and heed the words of Your Gospel. Strengthen our hearts to feel Your constant presence, and to faithfully embrace the call to Your ministry as our purpose, to light the way for us all in this life. We ask this of You, God's Chosen Son; and the Holy Spirit, our Wisdom Source; who together with our Creator, live and reign as one God, in Glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abasio, the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- **Lift Every Voice and Sing # 841 (Black history month)**
- **Come Down, O Lord Love Divine # 804**
- **Alleluia, Song of Gladness # 318**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

***Svend Berg***

***Essex Philip Udeh***

***Rikke-Louie Baur-Jocks***

February 27, 2022