

SERMON FOR TRANSFIGURATION 2019

TEXT: LUKE 9: 28-36

THEME: THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. **29** And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. **30** And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, **31** who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. **32** Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. **33** And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. **34** As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. **35** And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" **36** And when the voice had spoken, **Jesus was found alone**. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

In the name of Jesus:

You know it is approaching, just up ahead. You don't want to face it, but to get where you want to go, you have to. You are on a trip and you face the dreaded tunnel. There is nowhere to turn off and exit, you have to go through it. You hate the thought of it. But there it is. Your heart rate quickens. The palms of your hands get sweaty. Your mouth is dry. There is it, the dreaded tunnel, and your anxiety level is about to explode through the roof. As you enter it, you are praying to God to get you through this death defying experience. You look ahead, focusing not on the tunnel, but on the light at the end of the tunnel. You see it, you just need to get there. And when you are through the tunnel, when you have seen the light at the end of the tunnel, and get to the other side, there is a sense of relief, calmness, peace. The experience I have just described is very real for some, it is an actual anxiety, called tunnel anxiety. People get it when they see a tunnel and go through a tunnel.

But we have all, in a sense have experienced tunnel anxiety, in one form or another, haven't we? We all want to see at various times in our lives the light at the end of the tunnel.

The tunnels we face come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. You struggle, in your own way, with the darkness. There is the very real power darkness in your life, the darkness of fear, doubt, dread and anxiety. You see it in your health problems: the ache or pain that wasn't there the day before and the fear of wondering what it wrong with you. You see it in the look of fear in the face of a family member in the hospital or nursing home. Will they ever get out of there? Why can't they just go home?

There is the financial struggle you face, not just trying to get ahead, that seems impossible, it is the struggle to make ends meet. You wonder and are anxious if you are going to have enough. And what about your kids, will they be able to get by? You see it in your strained relationships, when someone treats you differently for no particular rhyme or reason. You see the power of darkness and the reality of darkness in the darkness of your own struggles within. When you are in the midst of the darkness, you hope for, you yearn for a light at the end of the tunnel, you just hope that the light at the end of the tunnel is an approaching locomotive!

That is why this Gospel lesson for today is so comforting, for even in the worst of times, in the midst of your suffering, pain, and darkness, Jesus gives hope for He is the Light whose light lightens the darkness.

Luke records that it was eight days after the Apostle Peter made his great confession that “You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus explained exactly what that Confession of faith meant, in that He, Jesus, “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” And the meaning of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection would not be lost on the disciples as Jesus further explained what it meant to follow Jesus: “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. **25** For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? **26** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Just as Jesus would give His life in love for His disciples, those who follow Him would be expected to follow in a manner worthy of Jesus, by taking up your own cross daily, denying yourself, and following Christ. If you try to save your life, you will be lost. Yet, if you allow your sinful self to be put to death so that Jesus might live in and through you, then your life would be saved. Don’t live as if you are ashamed of Jesus; rather, be faithful to Christ for He is faithful to you.

Now after Jesus spoke these words, He takes Peter, James and John up on a mountain to pray. While they were there: “And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. **30** And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, **31** who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Jesus appearance

was changed; He was glorified for a moment here on earth. Moses and Elijah, two of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament era, were seen speaking with Jesus about what Jesus was speaking to the disciples eight days earlier, namely, that Jesus must be handed over to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, suffer, die on a cross and then rise again on the third day. Jesus knows He is about to die. He is literally staring death in the face. If you see Jesus praying in the Garden before His crucifixion, Jesus sweats drops of blood all because of the stress and burden of giving Himself up unto death. And yet, in these moments of stress Jesus never flinched, He remained resolute to save the world.

Peter and the others were asleep but awoke and saw Jesus in His glory, along with Moses and Elijah. What a moment, a foretaste of glory. A glimpse of heaven. Who would want to leave? Obviously, no one, for Peter then says to Jesus: ““Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”. What a great experience, why not just capture the moment in time and live in that moment forever? They realized that there were in the presence of God when the cloud came over them. God in the Old Testament always showed up to be with His people in a cloud. When the people of Israel were following God in the wilderness, God lead them with a cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night. When God came down to speak to Moses on Mount Sinai, God’s glory was like a cloud covering the mount. Peter, James, and John knew full well what was happening, and they didn’t want to leave! God spoke in the cloud and told them specifically: “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” And then... nothing. It was all over, for when “the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.”

Peter, James and John must have thought what a downer! To be caught up with the Lord and to see Him in His glory, and then, back to reality. Back to earth, with all of the trials, tribulations, and death. Here they were able to not just see the light at the end of the tunnel, THEY WERE THERE! The greatest hope of a follower of Jesus is to be there with Him in glory. No more pain, no more trials, no more tribulations, no more sin, no more death. That is what they had in that moment, and then, snap, it vanished as quickly as it came. All they had now was Jesus.

Make no mistake, dear friends, all you need is Jesus. And that is what the disciples had, Jesus, only Jesus. Soon they would all go down from the mountain, and follow Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. They would see Jesus betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, rejected by both political and religious leaders. Jesus then would face death by crucifixion. He would be placed in a tomb for a total of three days. There would be weeping and wailing and sorrow for those who loved Him. And then, THE RESURRECTION! The followers of Christ would realize in the flesh that Jesus was not dead but risen, and that as God's Son in human flesh He would live and reign into eternity. In their following Jesus, the disciples would learn the hard way the way of the cross, they would be persecuted for following Christ, rejected for following Jesus; they would be put to death for the One who died for them. But in the end it would all be worth it, for they would see face-to-face Jesus, who is the Light of the World.

Life is filled with wonderful, and quite honestly, less than wonderful moments. Many of us have had them, those times when we felt like we were on top of the world, really happy, confident that we knew all the answers, could solve any

problem that came up. Or we felt that we were really close to God, really in tune with God's plan for us. In those moments we were excited and alive, and everything seemed new. But then, reality sets in. There are times when you have joy in our hearts when you are together with family, and heartbreak when you are separated by sickness and death. There are times when you feel at peace with a decision and peace about the moment, and other times when you worry and fret and are anxious about tomorrow. There are times when you are in worship and all is seemingly right with the world, and then you go back through the church doors to face the cold hard realities of living life for Jesus in a day and age when Jesus and the Church is ridiculed and mocked.

What we learn in Jesus' Transfiguration is that there is a Light at the end of the tunnel, there is hope for sinners when you are in the midst of darkness and despair. Your hope is Jesus, because Jesus is the Light of the world. Jesus has entered our human existence and He suffered as we suffer. Jesus has tasted our pain, He has met our sicknesses, and He has defeated the darkness of sin, Satan and death by His glorious resurrection from the dead. There is a Light that illuminates the darkness of our world and Jesus is that Light. HE IS YOUR LIGHT, YOUR LIFE, AND YOUR SALVATION. And He is the LIGHT, LIFE AND SALVATION FOR EVERYONE. Jesus has given to you His Light in the waters of Baptism. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus calls Himself the Light and identifies you as His lamp. The lamp is the instrument that shines forth with light. The lamp simply reflects the light that is in it. So too, God has given to you the Light of Christ. Now God seeks to work in and through you. All the lamp has to do is hold up the light. And what

follows is the message of light He would have us share. He wants us to tell the sin-darkened world ...that God forgives sins; that God is at work bringing about light in the darkness today; that God gives life and hope in Jesus Christ. That is why God places you in situations, among people, so that the Light of Christ will shine to the maximum in your life.

The experiences of your life will change and each day will bring with it its own set of challenges. You will continue to have joys and sorrows, but One remains, and He is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. No matter what you experience in life, all you really need is Jesus. And He is yours. Trust only in Him, cling to Him, and share the Light of Christ that is within you.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen