

Feast of the Transfiguration

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[0 : 00] Today we celebrate the Feast of Transfiguration. And there are so many things happening here in our Gospel text of Luke chapter 9 that it would take weeks to exhaust all of its rich imagery and meaning.

We could discuss the fact that Jesus appears on a mountain before radiating with light. You see, the mountain was the place where the Garden of Eden was established before it was hidden from humanity due to sin.

We could speak of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on a mountain. Mount Sinai, recorded in Exodus chapters 19 and 20.

The giving of the law was God ordering Israel's life as his people who were to be set apart from the rest of the nations. We could discuss how the Lord appeared to Elijah in 1 Kings chapter 19 on the mount, Mount Horeb, which, by the way, is also known as Mount Sinai, where Moses received the law.

Elijah encountered the presence and voice of God after lamenting that he was the sole prophet left who had not bowed the knee to Baal, a pagan god.

[1 : 27] And here in our text, in Luke chapter 9, we now have Moses and Elijah as the two required witnesses of the law, specifically from the book of Deuteronomy, and they are testifying that this Jesus is the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets.

We could discuss how Peter wants to build three tabernacles. Peter is so taken back by what he sees in this miraculous event that he wants to celebrate that great feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, sometimes called the Feast of Booths, which celebrated God's presence among his people as they made their way through the wilderness and as they prepared to enter the promised land.

We could talk about the voice of the Father and the cloud that enveloped Jesus and its connection to the cloud that led the Israelites by day as they made their way through the wilderness.

All of those themes are significant. All of those themes are worthy of study. But this morning, we're going to delve into a much more practical look at what the Transfiguration event means for us.

It's interesting that this feast is celebrated every year, not only on August the 6th, but it's also a major theme of epiphany as well. Why?

[2 : 59] Well, because it manifests not only who Jesus is, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

The Transfiguration manifests something about us. More specifically, it speaks to our purpose as baptized Christians.

In the Old Covenant, we read that Israel, Israel's vocation, Israel's calling, was to be a light to the rest of the world, to the rest of the nations.

In Isaiah chapter 42, verses 6 through 8, we read, I, the Lord, I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand and I will keep you and I will give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

And in Isaiah chapter 60, verses 1 through 3, we read, Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

[4 : 23] For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will arise over you and his glory will be seen upon you.

The Gentiles shall come to your light and the kings to the brightness of your rising. Israel's mission was to be the light of God that shined in a dark world so that the people in darkness would be set free from the tyranny of sin and death, that they would know God.

Sadly, however, Israel, time and time again, failed to be that light. Instead, they became dark, practicing paganism by following the herd and committing all kinds of idolatry, sexual immorality, and living like barbarians.

Sound familiar? They were being ruled by their own passions, their own desires, rather than being the people of God, allowing the light of God to reign in them so that this light would radiate through them to the rest of the world.

Therefore, what God did is to take this mantle, this mission upon himself. God did what Israel was called to do, but failed to do.

[5 : 55] And God came in human flesh, and Jesus is that light that has come into the world. And what Peter, James, and John experience now is this light in its full display.

You remember Moses? He asked to see the backside of God, and God put him in the cleft of the rock so that he could catch just a glimpse of God's glory.

Now these disciples, Peter, James, and John, are beholding the glory and light of God. But the transfiguration is not simply for us to ooh and aah about how awesome God's power is.

It's much more than that. Beloved, we receive this light in holy baptism. We receive this light as we were incorporated into Christ, as we became a part of his body.

As a matter of fact, after one is baptized, we light a candle, and then we give it to the new member of Christ's church. And this is not merely to give them a souvenir to take home.

[7 : 17] This lit candle represents what we are called to do, what we are called to be as children of God. From now on, we are to walk in the light and seek to put away the darkness.

The one being baptized is to renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways. The one being baptized is to renounce the wicked passions of the flesh.

And now the baptized Christian is commissioned. We have a vocation. Jesus' transfiguration. And that is to walk in the light, to love the light, and to be the light of God in the world.

Jesus' transfiguration was a glimpse into this light that we all now participate in as Christians. We are called to follow Christ.

We are called to walk in this light, putting away the darkness in our lives. But too often, we fall back into the grips of this darkness that wars against us and alienates us from God.

[8 : 39] And like Israel, we become followers of the herd rather than being beacons of the light of God. Too many times, we want the praise from others rather than to be pleasing to our God.

Friends, you and I are called to lead the way by allowing the light of God to fill us, to fill our lives. We are to allow the light of God then to shine and expose the darkness so that we and others might share in this life and in this light of God.

We are called to grow in the likeness of our God. Baptism is our entrance into the life of God, but it does not end at the font and it does not end when we take some vows at confirmation.

Baptism is our life. It is our family. It is our identity. It is now where we've been adopted into the family of God, but we are called to grow in union with God.

We are called to allow the light of Christ to overtake us so that this light then illuminates those around us. and this happens.

[10 : 11] This happens when we say yes to God, allowing his love to fill us so that that love can be poured out upon others.

We are called to be vessels of God, surrendering ourselves to him, loving what he loves. friends, we are called to be the body of Christ, the transfigured body of Jesus here in this world.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.