

## **God of Transformation**

Relational God: Part 5 “God of Transformation”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – February 19, 2023

Transfiguration Sunday

**Readings:** Matthew 17:1-9; John 1:29-34

**Reflection:** Psalm 99

**Greeting:** The Lord is merciful and compassionate. The Lord is very patient, and full of faithful love. The Lord is good to everyone and everything. God’s compassion extends to all his handiwork! (*Psalm 145:8-9*)

**Prayer:** Lord, our guide and our guardian, we pray that you will shelter us and lead us as we join together today in worship. May we remember the wonders of your creation each and every day. May we remember that we are a people of your great promise. May we recall your steadfast love that has been revealed to us. May we know that you are with us in all things old and new, and that you are there in every transition. We pray that you help us to face any change with faith and perseverance because you are with us. May we worship you in spirit and truth this hour, and may we proclaim the love of our savior is for all people. And it is in Jesus’ name we pray this day. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 99

*The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he! Mighty King, lover of justice, You have established equity; You have executed justice And righteousness in Jacob. Extol the Lord our God; Worship at his footstool. Holy is he! Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name. They cried to the Lord, and he answered them. He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept his decrees And the statutes that he gave them. O Lord our God, you answered them; You were a forgiving God to them But an avenger of their wrongdoings. Extol the Lord our God, And worship at his holy mountain, For the Lord our God is holy.*  
(*Psalm 99 NRSV\**)

We read the words of the 99th Psalm and we hear about praising God. That the Lord loves justice and is a forgiving God. Do you celebrate God in your daily life? Do you give thanks for God’s justice and mercy? How can we demonstrate God’s justice in our own lives? How can we share God’s love with the people that we meet? How has your life changed because of God? How can we help others to experience the joy of Christ in their lives?

**Prayer:** O God, help us to remember all that you are for us. May we always celebrate your steadfast love in all the ways that we experience it. May you bless us in your love and your peace so that we may share that love and peace with others. Help us to show love to each other as a sign of our love for you. May we show the compassion and mercy that has been shown to us through Christ our Lord. As we reach out to you with our joys and our concerns, may you build us up in your mercy and grace. May you lift us up in both laughter and tears that we may always find comfort in you. And may you strengthen us in our celebrations and our sorrows, knowing that you are with us always. And it is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Matthew 17 verses 1 through 9.

*Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." (Matthew 17:1-9 NRSV\*)*

Our other reading for today comes from John chapter 1 verses 29 through 34.

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One." (John 1:29-34 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today we finally come to the main event. We have been building up to this moment for the last four weeks and I hope that all the background has helped as we explore the transfiguration. We see this transformation happen when Peter, James and John go up with Jesus to the mountaintop. Before their eyes Jesus is changed. His entire look has changed. His

face is shining like the sun. His clothes are bright like light. A transformed Jesus is there with Moses and Elijah. This is the Transfiguration, transfiguration being a word introduced into the language by the Bible indicating this kind of drastic change. And what we see here is God's glory shining through in the form of Christ. Jesus' skin is glowing, and we can reference Moses. When Moses had been exposed to God's glory, his skin shone so bright he had to wear a veil over his face. Moses and Elijah are there with Jesus. We've talked about how Moses represents the law. Moses is the one who is given the law and witnessed God's glory. Moses is here on this mountaintop representing all of the law culminating in the coming of Jesus. Elijah is there, representing the prophets. Elijah who had been taken up to return to usher in the age of the Messiah. Elijah is there to show all the prophets fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Moses and Elijah are there bearing witness to God's glory in Christ. There for Peter, James, and John to bear witness to. And Peter doesn't know what to say. So he suggest that they set up three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

But while Peter is still talking a cloud overshadows them. A voice comes from the cloud. "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" This isn't the only time we hear something like that. We have one version in our final connection to the first chapter of John's Gospel. We have John proclaiming that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world away. John says that he saw the Spirit come down from heaven and rest on Jesus. And that this signifies that he is the one who will baptize by the Holy Spirit, that he is the Chosen One. We hear something like this in all of the Gospel accounts. Often using the same language we have in our reading today from Matthew about the beloved son that pleases God. We have been moving through this first chapter of John, hearing all about the Word become flesh and the pronouncement from John the Baptist. Each week exploring more about Christ that is revealed in this one moment on the mountaintop. John the Baptist announces that this is the Chosen One, and we hear this same thing from the voice in the cloud. The same voice that came in a pillar of cloud to Moses. The disciples hear this voice proclaiming who Jesus is and they are afraid.

Now, let us step back for a moment and contemplate Peter, James, and John. Here they are on the mountaintop, and what finally causes them to fear? Jesus has been transfigured, and his skin is shining like the sun and his clothes are bright white. He is standing with who they clearly identify as Moses and Elijah. And that isn't enough to frighten them. They are trying to decide what they should do when Peter suggests that they set up tents. But when that voice comes from the clouds, they fall down on the ground, overwhelmed by fear. But why are they afraid? Here's my thoughts on the matter. I don't think the voice terrified them, not in the way that they might have been afraid of something dangerous or really scary. I think they were in an awestruck fear. It was a fear from not knowing what they were supposed to do. They are already in awe of all the events happening around them, trying to make sense of it. They offer to set up tents for them, a sign of hospitality if nothing else. But when the voice comes from the clouds making that declaration, they knew they were in God's presence. Something spoken of

in Scripture, suddenly happening to them. It overwhelmed them. What are they supposed to do? What is the right procedure? I think I might have been right there with them with falling on my face. That is a pretty solid response, given how incredible this scene already is.

But then Jesus touches them and tells them not to fear. When they raise their eyes, it's just Jesus, back to normal, and alone. As they're coming back down the mountain Jesus tells them not to tell anyone about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead. And even this statement may have confused them. The disciples were always a little slow to accept what was going to happen. But I think this gave them an eye opener as to who Jesus is. Because in Matthew's account, it wasn't too long before this that Peter was answering a question about who people were saying Jesus is. When Jesus asks Peter, he replies that he thinks he is the Son of the living God. Jesus then warns them to say nothing. Then he begins to predict his death. Then, here we are, six days later. Just a week out from Peter declaring Jesus to be the Christ. Just a week out from Jesus telling them about his death and Peter trying to say it shouldn't happen. Just a week out and they get this revelation and confirmation of Christ. All of these ideas have been brought together for them. God is revealing his love and glory through Christ. God is starting a new chapter in our understanding. Peter, James, and John would know Moses and Elijah. They get that connection in all of this. This declaration of who Jesus is if revealed to them, this transition into a new creation in Christ. And in many ways, Peter, James, and John stand in for us. As we witness Christ in our lives. They bear witness to all of this, and the voice from the cloud doesn't come to confirm anything to Jesus. It is to declare who Jesus is to the disciples. The voice is directed at them, and it is God speaking directly to them. It isn't there for Jesus, and it isn't there for Elijah or Moses. They get a fuller understanding now of who Christ is. Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah, but now has a more complete picture of what that will truly mean. John the Baptist speaks of Jesus as the Chosen One who will baptize by the Holy Spirit, and now they have seen this glory themselves.

Because now they know that all the law and all the prophets are in him. And if the law is in him, then judgment is his. Condemnation is his to withhold or to execute. If the prophets are in him, then the truth is in him. Because he is the culmination of all the prophets, he is the one who will speak God's truth most clearly. Elijah and Moses are there bearing witness to Christ. Peter, James, and John are there bearing witness to everything. They are there so that they can reveal the full extent of God's character manifest in Jesus Christ. They have heard the God whose steadfast love and faithfulness had been with his creation from the beginning. The God who chose the Israelites to be his people, a people of promise. The God who led Moses out of Egypt and into the wilderness and led the people to the Promised Land was here. The God who spoke through the prophets, the God who took Elijah up and bestowed a double portion of that spirit on to Elisha is here. God's love and grace and mercy are on full display because God's glory is here in Jesus. God's voice declares "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" Even if it means listening to him about keeping silent. Because Jesus asks them to stay silent until after the resurrection. I think it is because Jesus knows that

the full understanding will not come until that point. That the full character of God will not be revealed completely until that point. And so, with Transfiguration we celebrate their faithful witness. We celebrate their passing along to us the fullness of God's love, mercy, and grace manifest in our Savior. And we celebrate all that Christ is for us this very day, as we celebrate the transformation of our hearts, and the transformation of our lives, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Current Series – Relational God**

Our current series takes inspiration from the story of the Transfiguration. Each week we look at a different relational aspect of God and move through the first chapter of John. We look at Abraham, Moses, and Elijah and finish with the story of the Transfiguration of Christ.

January 22nd – *God of Creation* – Genesis 1:1-2:3; John 1:1-5

January 29th – *God of Declaration* – Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22; John 1:10-13

February 5th – *God of Revelation* – Exodus 33:12-23, 34:4-9, 27-29; John 1:14, 16-18

February 12th – *God of Transition* – 2 Kings 2:1-14; John 1:6-9, 19-21

February 19th – *God of Transformation* – Matthew 17:1-9; John 1:29-34

## **Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gabel
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr
Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz	Donna Carlen
Ernie Peters	Jess shoot	Alberta Darling	Family of Janet Dixon
Stanley Kiser	Family of Kyle Lehman	Corrine Howard	Stacy Janes
Family of Ann Pennington	Don Gilmore	Griffin Neidigh	Shirley Jester
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Nick & Leana Ochoa	Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Kristen & Zach Morecraft	Greg Williams
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins
Janet Freeman			

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

[cdstmichael@outlook.com](mailto:cdstmichael@outlook.com)

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

\* Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

+ Scripture quotations are from the Common English Bible, Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.