

## **Transformed: Jesus**

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – March 2 2025

Transfiguration Sunday

**Readings:** Psalm 99, 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-36 CEB

**Reflection:** Psalm 34

**Greeting:** Establish justice for me, God! Because you are my God, my protective fortress! Send your light and truth—those will guide me! Let them bring me to your holy mountain. Let me come to God, my joy, my delight—then I will give thanks to you, God, my God! Hope in God! Because I will again give him thanks, my saving presence and my God. (Psalm 43)

**Prayer:** Precious Lord, we have seen the way that you can change hearts and lives through your steadfast love and faithfulness. May you help us to remember the transformation we see in the lives that you have touched. That we may remember the Transfiguration and the blessing that we have in the law and prophets coming together in Christ. Grant that we may know your peace and grace so that we may share it with others. May you lift our hearts in worship so that we may sing your praises and glorify your name. Help us to reach out to one another this day so that we may love our neighbor as ourselves as we further devote ourselves to loving you, O God. May you prepare us so that we may be transformed and call others to a life that is changed through walking with Jesus Christ, our Lord and friend. And it is in his name that we pray this day. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 34

*<sup>1</sup> I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup> I praise the Lord—let the suffering listen and rejoice. <sup>3</sup> Magnify the Lord with me! Together let us lift his name up high! <sup>4</sup> I sought the Lord and he answered me. He delivered me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup> Those who look to God will shine; their faces are never ashamed. <sup>6</sup> This suffering person cried out: the Lord listened and saved him from every trouble. <sup>7</sup> On every side, the Lord's messenger protects those who honor God; and he delivers them. <sup>8</sup> Taste and see how good the Lord is! The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy! (Psalm 34:1-8 CEB+)*

We read the words of Psalm 34, and we hear of God's deliverance. That God is with us in all things. That the face of those who look to God will shine, just as we are reminded of the way that Jesus, Elijah, and Moses shone in the Transfiguration. That God is always there to hear our prayers and save us. How have you had your own life changed by God's love? How do you share the love of Christ with others so that they can also experience that kind of transformation? Who will you lift up in your prayers this week? Who is it that you can help through the love of Christ? How will you keep the feeling of being transformed with you?

**Prayer:** Eternal God, we thank you for always being there for us. That you are with us in the good and the bad, in the easy and the difficult. We are grateful that you are with us in all that we are and all that we do. Today we remember the glory that shone forth in the Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain. May we remember the many blessings that you have shown to your people. We come before you in prayer this day lifting up the many joys and concerns that we have. We lift up our celebrations that we may celebrate them with you. We lift up our sorrows so that we may find comfort in your presence. We come together to share the prayers that we have lifted up aloud together. But we also lift up the unspoken prayers that we hold in our hearts. For we know that you hear every prayer that we lift up to you. May you strengthen us in the prayers we speak and the silent pleadings from within. May we know you are there in both our laughter and our tears. May we remember you in our dancing and our mourning. For you are always with us, Lord. May we experience your great love that transforms lives. May we love ever deeper because you are with us. And may we always celebrate Jesus Christ, our steadfast friend and Savior. 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 Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Psalm 99.

*<sup>1</sup> The Lord rules— the nations shake! He sits enthroned on the winged heavenly creatures— the earth quakes! <sup>2</sup> The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. <sup>3</sup> Let them thank your great and awesome name. He is holy! <sup>4</sup> Strong king who loves justice, you are the one who established what is fair. You worked justice and righteousness in Jacob. <sup>5</sup> Magnify the Lord, our God! Bow low at his footstool! He is holy! <sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel too among those who called on his name. They cried out to the Lord, and he himself answered them— <sup>7</sup> he spoke to them from a pillar of cloud. They kept the laws and the rules God gave to them. <sup>8</sup> Lord our God, you answered them. To them you were a God who forgives but also the one who avenged their wrong deeds. <sup>9</sup> Magnify the Lord our God! Bow low at his holy mountain because the Lord our God is holy!*  
(Psalm 99 CEB+)

Our next reading is from 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 12 through chapter 4 verse 2.

*<sup>12</sup> So, since we have such a hope, we act with great confidence. <sup>13</sup> We aren't like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the Israelites couldn't watch the end of what was fading away. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were closed. Right up to the present day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. The veil is not removed because it is taken away by Christ. <sup>15</sup> Even today, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But whenever someone turns back to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> The Lord is the Spirit, and where the*

*Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. <sup>1</sup> This is why we don't get discouraged, given that we received this ministry in the same way that we received God's mercy. <sup>2</sup> Instead, we reject secrecy and shameful actions. We don't use deception, and we don't tamper with God's word. Instead, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God by the public announcement of the truth. (2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 CEB+)*

Our final reading is from Luke chapter 9, verse 28 through 36.

*<sup>28</sup> About eight days after Jesus said these things, he took Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes flashed white like lightning. <sup>30</sup> Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with him. <sup>31</sup> They were clothed with heavenly splendor and spoke about Jesus' departure, which he would achieve in Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Peter and those with him were almost overcome by sleep, but they managed to stay awake and saw his glory as well as the two men with him. <sup>33</sup> As the two men were about to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it's good that we're here. We should construct three shrines: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—but he didn't know what he was saying. <sup>34</sup> Peter was still speaking when a cloud overshadowed them. As they entered the cloud, they were overcome with awe. <sup>35</sup> Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!" <sup>36</sup> Even as the voice spoke, Jesus was found alone. They were speechless and at the time told no one what they had seen. (Luke 9:28-36 CEB+)*

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

This week we reach the end of our Transformed series, and it comes to a culmination in the Transfiguration. This is the event that we have been working towards throughout this series. Over the last two weeks we've had background to help us to fully flesh out what happens here on the mountaintop. One of the things that I wanted to discuss is that this event is meant to be astounding. This event is meant to be full of wonder. It is meant to be something hard to understand. It is meant to be something fantastic. And I say all this because sometimes we're so desperate for an explanation that we miss the wonder and the amazement. I wanted to say right at the beginning here that that wonder, and that amazement are built in to the Transfiguration.

With that, we jump right into Luke's Gospel account. We see Jesus going up on the mountaintop to pray. He is there with his inner circle, Peter, James, and John. While they are all there, Jesus is transformed. He has changed in the blink of an eye. His clothes are a dazzling white. His face is glowing, just like we hear about with Moses. You'll notice that our reading from 2 Corinthians loops back around and gives us a little bit more about Moses and the veil this week. This glowing face reminded us of Moses. That they are all there glowing with

this divine essence. It is a sign that something truly miraculous is happening here. We see Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus, and they're also clothed in splendor. We have these three men standing here on this mountaintop talking. And they are talking about Jesus' departure, or in Greek, his exodus. And it matters that it's Moses and Elijah on the mountain with him.

As we have discussed over the last few weeks, Moses, in this instance, represents the law. We heard all about how the law was given to Moses and how he was a prophet to the people who delivered God's law to them to help them to know and understand what it was God expected from them. We have Moses here who was transformed by God's presence. His face shining in glory, now shining himself in glory there with Christ, standing on the mountain. But it's not just Moses and Jesus that are there, but Elijah is there. If you remember last week, we talked about Elijah finding God in that still smallness, in that thin quietness, and how Elijah was taken up and passed that prophetic spirit on to Elisha. Here we see Elijah representing all of the prophets, representing those who speak the truth of God and those who go out to do God's will. And we see Moses and Elijah and Jesus transformed on the mountaintop in glory. What a sight to behold. I can't imagine how that would look like. And I was reminded of the words from Psalm 99, "Magnify the Lord our God! Bow low at his holy mountain because the Lord our God is holy!" The God of Elijah, the God of Moses, the God of Paul, the God of Zacchaeus, the God of Jacob, the God of Abraham and Sarah. A God of transformation is showing what it's like to be transformed in that holiness, in that glory. That the veil is removed, the veil that keeps us from seeing God's glory clearly. This is a sign that it doesn't have to be hidden from us, that we can see it because God sees us as worthy.

Now, when we talk about Moses and Elijah being there on the mountaintop with Jesus as representing the law and the prophets talking about his departure, it helps us to understand what that really means. I see this as the culmination of the law. Jesus is the result that the law was meant to deliver. Jesus is the hope of the people, a new covenant so that people are no longer bound by a law they could never live up to, a law that needed a veil between them and God. This is that veil being lifted, and the law incarnate in Christ. That he is the true law, he is the message. In Christ, we see what it means to truly follow God. We get the same thing with Elijah being there. Elijah represents all of the prophets, all of the prophetic ministry that spoke the truth of God, a ministry that still goes on today. It is showing that all the prophets and all that they spoke and the truth that they held all culminates in Jesus. His transformation here in the Transfiguration, this change, is all about how he is the culmination of this prophetic message. That we see all that Jesus is and all that he has become in this moment. That all the law and all the prophets lead up to this. And they are discussing the ultimate act that brings all of these things together: his departure, his exodus, his death and resurrection. These events will truly reveal God's love and God's salvation to the people.

Now, Peter makes a suggestion at this point. I was thinking about this suggestion, and I think I know where Peter went wrong. You're getting a new thought from yours truly. And it's that Peter thought it was good that they were there. I don't want to discredit that. It is good for them to be there. However, Peter's suggestion is about constructing shrines, putting up tents,

ways to remember this event and mark it. And that they should stop. That's what registered for me this year in reading this account. And after reading about all of our transformations in this series, the thing that stood out is that Peter is talking about staying there to set up shrines, to put up tents so that they could remain there. But Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah about what has to be done. They are talking together, speaking of action and Peter begins speaking of standing still. And that registered with me in a whole new way this year because I started thinking about how our reaction to salvation sometimes is to stand still and to marvel. It is to hold in place and marvel at the gift but not moving forward so that we can share the gift. This stood out for me because the outside reaction to this transformation is let's stand still and look at it. Peter wants to stand and look while the three there clothed in the glory of God are discussing what must happen next. Jesus is speaking of action and Peter is speaking of standing still. This made me think about just how much of the Gospel message is about always moving forward. Because they see Jesus transformed in glory, preparing for this next stage. But it requires that he keeps going and keeps doing and keeps teaching because he's headed to Jerusalem.

I want us to keep this in mind because this next week begins Lent and we will begin reflecting on the difficulties we face as we keep moving forward in life. I want us to remember this event as we do that. That we remember Jesus speaking of his own exodus as we begin our congregation-wide reading plan of Exodus. That we remember Christ's transformation in glory to keep moving ahead as we learn how we move ahead through difficulty. And that in this time of reflection we remember Christ in his glory so that we may remember all of the amazing things that we have seen in the way God transforms lives. So let us remember that transformation. And may we always look at the way that we can say yes through faith to having our own hearts and our own lives be transformed by the love of God through living a life in Jesus Christ our Lord. And may we always accept the invitation from Christ to keep moving forward to have our own lives be transformed. 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 Next Series – Looking to Lent**

This series is a 5-week series plus Ash Wednesday and in it we will be discussing the various issues we face in life. Lent is a time of reflection and letting go, and as such we will be reflecting on the mindsets we can leave behind this year. We will discuss what we give up and what we take up when we face doubts, temptation, adversity, presumptions, indignation, and expectations during Lent. As we look to lent, we are reminded that we face everything with Christ.

3/5: Facing Doubt

3/9: Facing Temptation

3/16: Facing Adversity

3/23: Facing Presumptions

3/30: Facing Indignation

4/6: Facing Expectations

#### **Neoga Grace UMC**

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Worship 10:30am

#### **Toledo UMC**

Madison & Ohio St

PO Box 267

Toledo, IL 62468

Worship 8:15am

#### **Etna UMC**

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