



Christ Lutheran Church

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Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

“Priority One: the Word – Fulfilled!” – St. Mark 9:2-9

February 11, 2018 - Transfiguration

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Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the Gospel appointed for the day and already read for us from St. Mark's ninth chapter account of the Transfiguration.

My dear family in Christ, the variety of communication in the Bible is staggering. It ranges from the thundering, six-day creating voice of the Almighty to the discomfort Elizabeth feels when John, in her womb, alerts her to the presence of the Lord Jesus residing in the nearby womb of Mary. Verbal it wasn't, but communicating, it was. This is not even to mention the appearances of angels, the writing on the wall or the oration of Balaam's mount.

Then, there are the various voices of Scripture which are much like our own: Esther, who doesn't mention the name of God in her book, and the thief on the cross who acknowledges God, seeing His plan of salvation in Jesus at the very last moment; disreputable Rahab and Tamar ironically paving the way for the sage and saintly praises of Anna and Simeon.

In the Old Testament lesson options for this morning we could hear from either of the two miraculously appearing guests on the mount in the Gospel. In 2 Kings there is the prophet Elijah, the paradigm of speaking truth to power. He dueled the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, fighting the

evil of idolatry he would denounce, face-to-face, with King Ahaz and Queen Jezebel. As a prophet he would confront the evil leadership that was leading God's people astray.

In Exodus 34, by contrast, we had Moses. As God's servant he was not speaking against the leadership of God's people. Rather, he *was* the leadership of God's people, taking them from their Egyptian captivity to their place in the Promised Land. He had witnessed the glory of God, before; so much so that he had to have a veil cover his face so that its shining would not continue to frighten the children of Israel (nor would they after a while notice the glory was fading).

These two, Elijah and Moses, were symbolic of the Word of God preparing the world for the coming of the Christ. Moses is the Law giver par excellence and Elijah represents the prophets God sent to **foretell** and **forthtell**: **foretelling** what was going to happen and **forthtelling** the explanation of what God was doing now and why God was doing it.

Here they take part in what would lead John to write in his Gospel **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”(John 1:14)** These two had been part of the wondrous working of God in the world, but this was different. Here was the true Son of God, radiant before them. Some of the questions I have arising from this incident are:

- (1) **How were they known?** What was it that gave away the identities of Elijah and Moses to the disciples present? I have no idea, but perhaps in the Transfiguration's light much more was revealed than what Jesus was wearing and how bright He was.
- (2) **What did the three of them talk about?** I don't know that, either. Perhaps it's not too much to say that they were discussing the work of God done before and how it would reach its fulfillment in this Jesus of Nazareth?

Elijah would confront idolatry centuries before Jesus would. His was an earlier version of **“Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,”** and **“You cannot serve both God and Mammon,”** decrying the fact that the place where God was to abide with His people had been made into a den of thieves.

Elijah would also be God’s instrument for the parting of the waters. His is the final time, parting the Jordan for Elisha and him to cross so the other side. This Jordan had been parted before, by Joshua as he led the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. But for his disobedience, this second instance would have been done by Moses, who is responsible for the largest, most impressive parting of the waters as the Children of Israel went through the Red Sea on dry ground.

What does Moses bring here on the mountain top to the understanding of the mission of the Messiah? Again, this is speculation, but this is the easier tie to make. Moses was the one who first lifted a symbol affixed to a stake – lifting the bronze serpent in the air so that all who were bitten by the burning serpents could be healed.

Here is a forerunner of looking in faith on what God had provided so that a person could be spared God’s judgment. Here, too, John is the one who specifies truth for us: **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,** ¹⁵ **that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.** John 3:14-15 .

Here are Elijah’s words and Moses words, here are all of God’s Words fulfilled. They meet their consummation in Christ Jesus. His mission is the crimson thread that runs through the Scriptures.

Here is the One Who, after having lived a life of obedience, would be sacrificed to pay for the sins of the world. He would subject Himself to the false accusations. He would allow Himself to be ridiculed and abused, beaten and tortured. Jesus would be condemned, not just by men but by the

Father in Heaven, so that you and I might know the complete forgiveness of our sins and a release from the suffering of hell.

And from this death and burial Jesus would rise. His was not the burial of Moses on the outskirts of the Promised Land – a burial that in tradition would have to be protected from Satan’s menacing. (Jude 9)

Nor was Jesus’ a life without death, as was the case with Elijah. Elisha watches as the chariots of fire take Elijah on his final ascent to the presence of God.

No, Jesus would most certainly be crucified, and the Romans batted 1000 with respect to death following such torture. And from that death Jesus would rise again – sharing His righteousness with us by faith and assuring us that death’s defeat would be shared with us as well.

And it’s worth noting that Jesus does not allow these three witnesses to say anything about this transfiguration until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. Only after the glory of the Resurrection would the glory of the transfiguration both (a) make sense and (b) be put into perspective.

This is the glory that we proclaim, that the Word has been fulfilled. ¹² **Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end... And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[e] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another... Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,^[a] we do not lose heart.... For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^[c] for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine**

out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 3:12-4:6

Such is the glory that God has shared with us, by faith in Christ Jesus. Such is the glory that God has shared through His Word, the Word made flesh. His Word is Priority One – for the salvation of the world. Amen.