

Transfiguration Sunday

February 19, 2012

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 9:2-9

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. (NIV)

We have an expression we use when we believe a person is showing us who they really are we refer to it as seeing their true colors. For example when a child gets in front of a crowd and shows off just like they might do at home people get to see the child's true colors. But we don't always see people's true colors, do we? Because we all wear masks, hide a bit, and hold back our true selves at times, don't we?

But there are occasions, as a song in the 80's suggests, our true colors come shining through. Perhaps they shine brightest and clearest in times of trial or when our feet are put to the fire so to speak. Soldiers might show their true colors when the time actually comes to step up and put all their training into action. Will they run, hide, fold, or will they boldly defend and protect and put their lives on the line? A mother shows her true colors not when she has all her makeup on and is ready to go out for a nice dinner at a fancy restaurant, but when she has a sink full of dirty dishes and a sick kid. Her true colors are in the love and care she provides even then. That's when mom is at her best.

What about Jesus? When would we say that Jesus truly showed us his true colors? When does Jesus most obviously show people who He is? Today, we walk with Jesus and his disciples up to a high place where who Jesus is clearly revealed. Today, we watch Jesus as He leaves this mountain so we might never forget Jesus' true colors. I pray the Spirit opens our eyes this morning so that we: **See Jesus true colors as we witness His Glory! On the mountain! In His departure from the mountain!**

Jesus started to speak plainly and in detail about His coming passion. It troubled the disciples to hear Jesus say He must suffer many things, be rejected, killed and then after three days rise. Now about a week after talking of these things, Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him up to a private spot on a high mountain. We can speculate but we are not told which mountain. And this is fine because what happens here is way more important than where it happens. I'm sure that these three disciples thought they had already witnessed the best of Jesus' true colors. They were there and put their faith in Jesus when Jesus first revealed a glimpse of His glory by changing water into wine.

They saw Jesus' glory as He healed the sick. This glory was revealed to them when Jesus calmed the sea. They had even seen Jesus raise a little girl from death.

But they had never seen Jesus like this. On this mountain, something happens to Jesus that is too great to describe. ***There he was transfigured before them.*** It is the Greek word from which we get our word metamorphosis. It means to transform or to change in form. But for Jesus it wasn't changing into something else or something He was not. In a sense a veil was coming off – Jesus was showing His real true colors. The disciples had known Jesus to be true man (which he was), but they had only seen glimpses of the fact that Jesus was also true God. But now God the Father wanted to make this known beyond all doubt. So Jesus' glory is revealed and: ***“His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.”*** Matthew writes that: ***“His face shone like the sun.”*** Luke records: ***“The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”***

Why do the disciples see what they see? Here is God. Here, as Paul writes: ***“all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”*** (Colossians 2). As if this wasn't enough proof, Moses and Elijah appear and start chatting with Jesus as with old friends. If that was still not enough to convince them that this man is also God, that the glory of the Lord was there, a cloud envelopes the mountain and ***“a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”*** The disciples had seen Jesus' true colors but never like this before!

What a glorious sight for sore eyes and ears! What a sight for disciples who are still stunned after hearing about all the talk of suffering and death! Now they are told three things from that voice in heaven. One that Jesus truly is God's Son. Jesus is exactly who the disciples thought He was – the Messiah. Secondly, that Jesus is God's beloved Son. Whatever happens to Jesus it is not because God does not love Jesus. Jesus perfectly pleased God and was very much loved by His Father. And finally, they are to listen to Jesus. They are to listen to Jesus no matter what He tells them. They are to listen to His Words above all others.

As we go up this mountain this morning and see Jesus' true colors I pray it is a sight for our sore eyes and ears. Jesus is true God. He is God's Son sent for us. He gives us this glimpse of glory before Lent. He wants us to remember His glory, to remember His power, when things don't look all that glorious. When our hearts are breaking, when we are troubled by our sins, when we are afraid or at a loss, remember this sight! Jesus is your powerful God. Listen to Jesus. Listen to His promises and words of comfort. Listen to Him pray for your forgiveness. Listen to Him cry out as He suffers the hell you and I deserved. Listen to Jesus tell you the cross was a must so that He can and will take you one day to be with Him in glory!

But that day was not this day for these disciples. Peter wanted this moment to last and even offered to build three shelters. But Peter did not know what he was saying. Instead, ***“Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”***

This glorious moment had come and passed. Now they were alone. It was just them and Jesus who was still God, but also still man and dressed again in the form of a servant. Jesus orders them not to tell anyone of this glory until after His resurrection. So Jesus and His disciples depart from the mountain of transfiguration.

Yet, dear friends, this is where we see most clearly Jesus' true colors! This is where we see Jesus at His best. For Jesus leaves this mountain of glory to climb another mountain. Jesus will carry a cross up another hill called Golgatha. Jesus departs from this mountain and He comes down because He loves His disciples. He loves you and me. Jesus comes down the mountain because He is going to pay the price for all the times the disciples and we have listened to the devil instead of Jesus. Jesus puts His glory aside because He knows that without His perfect life and innocent sacrifice the disciples and we would have to stand before God on our own. Jesus knows we have fallen short of His glory and would be sent to the pit of hell. So Jesus comes off this glorious mountain so He can go to Jerusalem and die for sinners. In fact, Luke tells us that is what the conversation between Jesus and Moses & Elijah was all about. They were talking about Jesus' departure that was about to take place in Jerusalem.

Christian friends, come and see Jesus' true colors again this Lent. See Jesus at His best as He carries your infirmities and sorrows and prays for you with drops of blood. See Jesus taken into the hands of sinners, tried, and condemned as a criminal. See how Jesus, as all-powerful God, humbles himself and allows Roman soldiers to mock and torture Him. See Jesus as He carries all sin to Calvary's hill. See Jesus as God the Father turned His back on the Son He loves so our death penalty could be paid. See Jesus as He breathes His last and bows His head in death. See His cross. See your Savior.

Walk with Jesus this Lent and see how much He loves you. See what Jesus willingly did under trial when His feet were most put to the fire so that you and I can share in His glory. Jesus reveals His true colors not just on this mountain but by leaving this mountain. May we leave the mountain with Him so that we can follow Him to a celebration of glory in an empty tomb - a celebration of glory that will have no end! Take time out of your busy schedules this Lent to come on Wednesdays to see your Savior's true colors in His passion history! What takes place in this passion is what saves you and me from our sins and gives us the righteousness that we surely need before God. This is what redeems us from the pit of hell and puts us on the path to heaven where we will dwell forever! Jesus' true colors shine brightly as we witness His glory. See them on the mountain. See them on the cross and in the empty tomb. See them in His Word and in His Sacrament. Listen to Jesus say once and for all: "It is finished." Come to this place again and again to hear Jesus assure you: "***Your sins are forgiven.***" In a way Peter had it exactly right: "***It is good for us to be here.***" Amen.