

# “Living Light” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Transfiguration Sunday February 11, 2024

- I. **2 Corinthians** chapters 3 and 4, previously read.
- II. **The Transfiguration:**
  - a. I say this each year, but this day on the Church calendar is a little difficult to wrap our minds around.
  - b. The story in our Gospel lesson has Jesus climbing up to a high place with Peter, James and his brother John.
    - i. Jesus then transfigures, or changes to something different – a glowing, bright white person... unlike anything that was possible... no LED light strings hidden under clothing in those days!
    - ii. Some very important figures from the Old Testament make their appearance – Moses and Elijah, which just adds to the confusion of what is happening for poor Peter, James and John.
  - c. Then comes the voice of God the Father out of nowhere – and in these words are echoes of other important places in the Bible – for example;
    - i. 1500 years before Jesus, Moses said in Deuteronomy 18:15 – “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers-- it is to him you shall listen—”
    - ii. But also, these same words were used by the Father at Jesus’ Baptism, in Mark 1:10-11 – “<sup>10</sup> And when [Jesus] came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.’”
    - iii. It’s as if God was literally highlighting Jesus to glorify Him in front of witnesses – to give Peter, James and John a glimpse of divinity.
- III. **The trouble is...**
  - a. We just can’t figure out why this event is so important in our lives of faith.
    - i. What does the transfiguration mean to us and how we live our lives as Christians?
    - ii. I’m not saying it’s NOT important... It’s just a little difficult to see why it matters to us in our walk with Jesus today.
  - b. One reason it’s difficult is because it’s supernatural, right? It’s an event that requires us first to believe a miracle which none of us have experienced in real life... and it also takes some imagination –
    - i. Can you imagine a glowing Jesus?
    - ii. Can you imagine Elijah and Moses, along with God’s booming voice?
    - iii. It’s just hard to wrap our minds around this scene.
  - c. You see, as humans, we would much rather have a thing we can see, hear, touch, smell or taste –
    - i. We like empirical evidence to help us understand things...

- ii. We like things to be solid and explainable so we feel better – even if it is false or an idol!
- iii. In other words, God takes a back seat to the things right in front of us – especially when we think of Him like we hear in the Bible today – glowing like the sun, speaking from clouds, terrifying the disciples...
- d. Paul even writes in 2 Corinthians – Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after spending time in God’s presence... glowing – so that he had to wear a veil over his face because it scared people.
  - i. All Paul is saying is that if what Moses got from God was the Law (the Ten Commandments and all God’s commands) and he was glowing, then how much more should Jesus glow with the light of the Gospel – something so much greater than the Law?
  - ii. But Paul also talks about how the devil is blinding people to seeing God’s glory in the Gospel... or the Good News that Jesus died and rose again to forgive all people.
    - 1. I know Paul is talking about unbelievers here – but we are just as susceptible to being blinded to the Gospel light.
    - 2. We get blinded by idols and false gods that shine brightly and attract us away from what is most important.
    - 3. Paul even says later in 2 Corinthians 11:14 – “...for even satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

IV. **What idols are shining brightly in your life?**

- a. What idols attract us like moths to a flame?
- b. Remember, idols are anything we place our trust in more than God... or anything we allow to deceive us and tempt us away from God.
- c. Unfortunately, satan does a great job of taking something meant for good and turning into an evil, attention grabbing idol.
  - i. For example, in almost every setting in America – even churches – the dull light of a smart phone is glowing.
    - 1. Today, some people (and especially our youth) can spend as much as 12 to 14 hours a day on their phones... texting, messaging, scrolling, and watching mindless videos.
    - 2. Take a phone away from someone for a few hours and watch... it’s like someone trying to get off drugs.
  - ii. Another idol in our lives that can also be good... is money.
    - 1. We earn it, we spend it, we save it and try to make a retirement nest egg... we worry about it... we think about it way too much.
    - 2. I often ask, how would that make you feel if you were wired 10 million dollars into your bank account today... free and clear?
      - a. Would you breathe a huge sigh of relief that all your needs would be taken care of?
      - b. Yet, money isn’t the answer... God is.

- c. When we trust in our own plans and designs, God says that He will give us everything we need... just like He takes care of little birds – and how much more does He love us than the birds? (Matthew 6:26)
  - d. In the end, idols and false gods leave us hopeless and without light.
    - i. They might be so attractive, look so good, sound good, and even seem so right – but they take us away from our mission.
    - ii. And if we are spending all our time with false idols and dead gods, we can never be the people God created us to be – a follower of Jesus Christ who through us restores and redeems... through us, shines His light.
- V. **It's hard when God seems out of touch – beyond understanding.**
  - a. Sometimes we might feel like the spiritual side of things like faith and God and miracles are just too much to believe – sometimes the Bible seems like an old book with stories that don't connect to our daily lives.
  - b. And we might even be attracted to things that give us comfort in a worldly way – things like alcohol and drugs, food, pornography, relationships, or any other thing that we can see, hear, touch, taste or smell...
  - c. But I want to bring you back to a God who is very real...
- VI. **Jesus is the real deal.**
  - a. The story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection as a historical event is given to us by 100's of witnesses and written down for our benefit...
    - i. First of all, He was a real, historical figure.
    - ii. Secondly, He lives on through the people He brought to faith
  - b. Paul says in our reading that the people who believe in Jesus are transformed into His image by the Holy Spirit.
  - c. You want to know why the transfiguration matters in your faith life today?
    - i. Because Jesus is GOD!
    - ii. Jesus is able to transform us, to free us, and give us more than anything this world could ever offer.
    - iii. The transfiguration means that Jesus is not just another false idol or hopeless situation – He is alive and well, He is with us in His supper, in our Baptisms, His Word, and in each of us individually as we connect as the Body of Christ.
    - iv. The transfiguration means that we have a living God.
    - v. The transfiguration means that I am transformed by the same Spirit I received at my Baptism.
    - vi. The transfiguration means that I am connected to Jesus in both His humanity AND His divine glory – I'm connected to the cross and to the resurrection.
  - d. Through faith, each of us are now a living light for God – but more than that... one day, we will be transfigured just like Jesus in our story today... a glorified body that will shine Christ's light forever...

e. So be the light that God made you to be... shining out for all to see... while looking ahead to your future glory - Amen.