

The Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord
St. Matthew 17:1-9
January 24th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

His Face Shown Like the Sun

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Merciful and Everlasting God, heavenly Father: We thank Thee that Thou hast revealed unto us the glory of Thy Son, and let the light of Thy Gospel shine upon us: We pray Thee, guide us by this light that we may walk diligently as Christians in all good works, ever be strengthened by Thy grace, and conduct our lives in all godliness; through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Apostle and Evangelist St. John in the opening chapter of his Gospel, which we heard on the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, writes that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” St. John was speaking of the event that we have in our Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew and the Festival that we celebrate today—the Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord. The Apostles beheld the glory of the Lord. Sts Peter, James and John beheld the glory of the Lord. They beheld the face of the Lord + Jesus shining like the sun. They saw His clothes become as white as light. They heard the Voice from Heaven declaring the Lord + Jesus to be the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among. The Lord God in the Person of the Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The glory of the heavenly Father came down from Heaven and chose to dwell with us. The Lord God dwells with His people in the Person of the Son of God—our Lord + Jesus Christ. In this Man + Jesus the full majesty of the Godhead dwelt bodily. And the Apostles beheld the glory of the Lord. They beheld the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father in the Man Christ + Jesus. He was full of grace and truth.

St. Peter in the Epistle reading also talks about bearing witness to the glory of the Lord on the Mountain of Transfiguration. He says they were eyewitnesses of the majesty of the Lord + Jesus. They received from the heavenly Father a gift—honor and glory—when the Voice spoke from Heaven. The cloud overshadowed them, and they heard the Voice proclaim, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” The same Voice that spoke at our Lord’s baptism, which we celebrated a little over a week ago, spoke the same words that He spoke on that day when the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven like a dove and settled upon the Lord + Jesus. From the same cloud that led the Israelites by day out of the land of Egypt and continued to lead them throughout the forty years in the wilderness, a Voice was heard that proclaimed the Lord + Jesus to be His Only-Begotten Son, in Whom He is well pleased.

Sts. Peter, James and John beheld His glory, glory that comes only from the Father; glory that only belongs to the Lord + Jesus; glory that only belongs to the Son of God. His glory is that He is the Light of the world. His face shown like the sun and His clothes became as white as light. The Light shines in the darkness of this world. The Light of Christ fills this dark world full of sin. The sinless, perfect and innocent One fills this world full of sin, evil and shame with His wonderful majesty; He fills this world with His works and merits. He atones for the sins of the whole world—the Light of the world—by suffering on the tree of the cross as darkness filled the whole Earth. In darkness, the Light of the world redeemed mankind from their sins, so that all those who believe on Him might be justified in the sight of the heavenly Father.

We now have peace with the heavenly Father because the Lord God came down and dwelt among us. The Light of Heaven came down and dwelt in this dark world. His full majesty is shown to Sts. Peter, James and John on the mountain of Transfiguration, where His face shown like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light; where He talked with Moses and Elijah about His coming sacrifice that atones for the sins of the whole world. The Apostles beheld the glory of the Lord and heard Moses and Elijah speaking with the Lord + Jesus about His death and resurrection that was fast approaching. It is fast approaching for us here today, too. We will hear of our atonement during Holy Week in a little over two months from now.

The majesty of the Lord + Jesus was made manifest on the mountain of Transfiguration to the Apostles Sts. Peter, James and John, but this was not the first time that His glory was made manifest to them. The season of Epiphany is all about the Lord + Jesus making manifest His glory; it is all about the Lord + Jesus revealing Himself to the world to be the Messiah—the Son of God come down from Heaven to redeem His people. His glory that only comes from the heavenly Father when He was worshiped by the magi from the East. His majesty was revealed when He sat with the teachers in the temple both listening to the them and asking questions, revealing that His knowledge of Scriptures was far beyond the normal boy of twelve years old. His glory was revealed at the waters of the Jordan River when He was baptized by St. John the Baptist and purified all waters for use in Holy Baptism, and the Voice came from Heaven and declared Him to be the Only-Begotten Son of the Father in Whom He was well pleased, upon Whom the Holy Ghost descended like a dove. His glory and majesty were also revealed at the wedding in Cana of Galilee when He performed His first miracle of changing water into wine. The Apostles saw His glory at this wedding in the miracle He performed and believed on Him.

They believed Him to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the One sent into the world by the heavenly Father to redeem the world from sin and death. St. Peter makes this confession only six days prior to this event. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew writes at the beginning of this Gospel pericope that the Transfiguration of our Lord happened *after* six days. Like I said last Sunday, when we see these phrases, any good Bible student needs to ask the question, “what came six days *before*?” Six days before the Transfiguration of our Lord St. Peter, whose Second Epistle we read for the Epistle of the day, declares that the Lord + Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. The good confession of St. Peter happens six days before the events of today’s Gospel reading.

You will remember that after the confession of St. Peter, our Lord + Jesus began to show His Apostles that He must suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and be killed, and be raised on the third day. He begins to reveal that the reason He has come into the world is to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world. The Light of the world—our Lord + Jesus, the Christ—has come to remove the darkness of sin and death by His own death on the tree of the holy cross. He has come to reveal His glory. This glory is revealed on the cross when He suffers and dies for us poor, miserable sinners. He fills our darkened by sin souls with His eternal Light. He removes our sin and shame by His life and light.

For this He is rebuked by St. Peter. St. Peter had in mind the things of man, not the things of the

Lord God. Man seeks glory through power and subduing their enemies by oppression and tyranny. St. Peter wanted a Messiah that would throw off the oppression of the earthly Roman government. St. Peter is not alone in this, we do not want our earthly governments oppressing us, either. We also pray to the Lord God to protect us from evil government rule; that His good and gracious will might be done among us for the maintenance of righteousness and the punishment of wickedness and sin. This is what St. Peter desired, but this is not why the Lord + Jesus came, this is not why the Church exists today. The Lord + Jesus came not to establish an earthly kingdom, but He came to be the Light shining in the darkness. He came to reveal that just as His face shown like the sun, the darkness of sin and shame will be overcome in Him and His works and merits.

The Light of the world shines in this dark world filled with sin and shame, because the Lord + Jesus has revealed His glory and majesty on the mountain of Transfiguration. He has revealed in His conversation with Moses and Elijah that He has come to suffer and die at the hands of evil men on the tree of the holy cross to atone for the sins of the whole world and be raised again on the third day so that all those who believe on Him might be justified through faith.

The Light of the world continues to shine in this dark world—even in the midst the outward oppression of evil governments—because the Church still exists in this world. The Church through the pure preaching of the Word of God—the preaching about the Light of the world; our Lord + Jesus—dispels the darkness of this world by turning men’s hearts away from the trials and tribulations of this world to the Christ and the heavenly Home which He has prepared for us by His death. Our citizenship is not of this world. Our citizenship is in Heaven. Our land is the heavenly realm that awaits us when our Lord + Jesus calls us to our eternal Home. The Church is here for us to remind us of this fact. The Church preaches into our ears this Gospel message, and satisfies our hunger and thirst with the Blessed Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar.

The Apostles beheld the glory and majesty of the Lord + Jesus—they saw that He was truly the Son of God, the Light that came down from Heaven and dwelt among them. They saw it in His works and merits and Sts. Peter, James and John saw it in its fullness on the mountain of Transfiguration. We also behold His glory and majesty whenever we come into this holy house and hear about all the good things He has done for our salvation—how He has come into the world to dispel the darkness and be our One and Only Light. We see His glory and majesty in the pure preaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments. Here in this place the darkness of this world is overshadowed by the Light of the world—our Lord + Jesus, the Christ—and His works and merits on our behalf. His face shines like the sun in our midst. He dispels the darkness of this world in our midst. For He reveals Himself to be for us our hope and our salvation. Let us give Him thanks and praise always. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, we give Thee most hearty thanks that Thou hast given us Thy holy Word as a bright light in the darkness of this present world, and humbly beseech Thee, enable us by Thy Holy Spirit to heed diligently the light of the Word, that the Daystar from on high, Thy Son, with grace divine, may arise in our hearts, and as the true Light continually shine, until the night is fully spent and the great Day at hand; through the same Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!