

**[OPENING SLIDE]**

*Transfigured to Transform*

*“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.”*

*“O God, in the glorious transfiguration of Your only-begotten Son, You once confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of the ancient fathers, and in the voice that came from the bright cloud You wondrously foreshowed our adoption by grace. Therefore, mercifully make us coheirs with our King of His glory, and bring us to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven; through Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.” (Collect for Transfiguration Sunday)*

**Introduction**

This past Monday, the Elders and I spent some time reflecting on this congregation's last few years. I posed a couple questions to get the conversation started (on the PowerPoint slides):

✚ **[SLIDE # 2]** What do you feel to be Trinity's/Pastor's more lasting accomplishments? How have we as a congregation changed or been transformed?

✚ **[SLIDE # 3]** Looking ahead, what do you perceive Trinity's greatest challenge(s) to be? What would you like me/congregation to work on in the next 2 years?

As they are still pondering those questions, I would love to hear your own responses – better shared over a charcuterie and some chardonnay.

Wherein, I believe that the life that God pours into us continues to transfigure/transform us – as disciples ... as His people.

We who have seen the transfigured Lord, are – even now – being transformed into the glory of His likeness. (Adapted from Nichols, *CPR*, 1:1, 41)

In the Lord's economy of grace, we are ...

**[OPENING SLIDE]**

**TRANSFIGURED TO TRANSFORM.**

This is what Jesus did. This is who Jesus redeemed us to be.

Amen.

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Transfiguration, a bridge between who Jesus is ... and what Jesus came to do. To be transfigured is what happens in a caterpillar's metamorphosis ... change, new birth. Where, in Jesus' case, this profound moment does not change His nature, but reveals to the disciples that He *is* the radiance of God, commissioned by His Father for a "crucial, cross-dominated mission." (Lobien, *CPR*, 4:1, 49)

It is in light of this mission of mercy that we are saved. Indeed, there is no other way for us *to be saved* than to believe that Jesus has come for us – to die for our sins, to be raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25; 5:16, 18)

Where, in light of this mission of mercy and grace, we stand, coming to reflect more and more what our heavenly Father desires that we be by His grace.

It is *this* hope of which Paul speaks in v. 12 ... the fullness of our inheritance in heaven. Yes, in Jesus' transfiguration, we behold God's merciful plan of salvation unfolding, enfolding us ... making us a part of something wonderful.

What exactly?

✚ [SLIDE # 5] Our own transfiguration or transformation.

Previously consigned to wander in the wilderness of sin and death, God mercifully rescued us, bringing us to share in His life.

It's what Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about on the mountain ... "*what He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:31) ... namely our salvation. In Jesus' transfiguration – and eventual death and resurrection – the way "*through the valley of death*" (Psalm 23) has a way out. At this glorious moment, we see God's merciful plan unfold, all to bring us in ... all to bring us to life.

What else do we become a part of?

✚ [SLIDE # 6] Through our Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, "*we are clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with Jesus' robe of righteousness.*" (Isaiah 61:10)

Yes, not only is our eternal destination changed, but we are changed – each time we hear "your sins are forgiven" ... each minute we take to be with Him in His Word ... each trip we take to His house and to the Lord's Table ... each spirit-filled conversation we have with a brother and sister in Christ. We are changed. We are transfigured, becoming more and more like our Savior.

Where, finally ...

✚ [SLIDE # 7] We grow in becoming a reflection of all that God in His mercy pours into us. We become inheritors of something great, beautiful, necessary, bold:

<sup>3:12</sup>**Since we have such a hope** (the fullness of our inheritance in heaven) **we are very bold,** <sup>13</sup>*not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome (the end or goal<sup>1</sup>) of what was being brought to an end.*

“Our sure hope in the Gospel gives us great courage and freedom to carry out our mission and calling as Christians” (Koch, CPR, 7:1, 43) ... not hidden behind some veil.

<sup>14</sup>*But their minds were hardened (“made insensitive, covered with thick skin”<sup>2</sup>). For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup>Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup>But when one turns (is converted, by way of repentance and faith<sup>3</sup>) to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit (“the Lord and giver of life”<sup>4</sup>), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>And we all, with unveiled face (i.e. in whom the Spirit dwells<sup>5</sup>), beholding (“as to contemplate something, to look at something as in a mirror”<sup>6</sup>) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed<sup>7</sup> into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

[SLIDE # 8] Where there is much at work in this world to obscure the need for this hope, the need for Jesus ... at times even clouding our own witness to the joy of life in Him ... like:

- ✚ Our own reason (thinking we know more than we know, thinking we can pretty much fix any problem with a little more effort) ... or;
- ✚ Living in a world ingratiated to the “cult of self-actualization” (thinking we don’t really need God to change, after all, we have Oprah and Osteen with their “self-help” theology) ... or;
- ✚ Taylor and Travis, and a whole host of celebrities and sports figures (to help guide us, as we – to use Neil Postman’s term – “amuse ourselves to death”) ...
- ✚ Economic success, blind nationalism, or even church tradition. (Shawnthea Monroe-Mueller, *Feasting on the Word* (B), 1:448)

Each of these false “gods” – false hopes – leave us where we started, longing for what God has *already given* to us by His grace:

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<sup>1</sup> Christ is “the end of the Law” (Romans 10:1-4)

<sup>2</sup> Koch, CPR, 7:1,43

<sup>3</sup> Nichols, CPR, 1:1, 42

<sup>4</sup> Nicene Creed

<sup>5</sup> Koch, 44

<sup>6</sup> BAGD, 424

<sup>7</sup> “This transformation consists in giving up conformity to the world and in renewing the mind according to God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will (Romans 12:2). This transformation, ‘from glory to glory,’ takes place in part in this world, as we ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 3:18). And it will take place in full on the Last Day, when we behold his glory face-to-face (John 17:24; Philippians 3:21).” (Koch, 44)

*“These things (like the Transfiguration) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)*

**[SLIDE # 9]** This Word – and the Savior it brings us (this crèche/cradle of Christ) – delivers our one true salvation, and give to us our one true aim.

“The pulpit and the altar, and the Bible in the home, are our ‘mountains’ of transfiguration. As the Spirit works in us through these means, Christ’s life is poured into us” where the old nature is put down, and the new life of Christ arises to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. (Koch, 44)

**4:1 *Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.*** <sup>2</sup> *But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.* <sup>3</sup> *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.* <sup>4</sup> *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* **5 *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.***

How blessed this vision – for any congregation ... in any age ... but especially for our time, for this people!

Wherein, how is this vision stoked and kept alive?

 **[SLIDE # 10]** Rekindle the spiritual fire.

*“Blessed is the [one who’s] ... delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:2, 3)*

*“If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” (Jeremiah 20:9)*

**[SLIDE # 11]** Actively seek to be like Christ.

*“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)*

*“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:40)*

+ [SLIDE # 12] Casting your eyes only Jesus.

*“And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.” (Mark 9:8)*

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8)*

***<sup>6</sup> 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.***

### Conclusion

[SLIDE # 13] I have noticed a change ... in many of you ... in this congregation!

- + Having come through the fire (of which there is always a threat of that) we have come to some stability that serves as a strong foundation for the future.
- + The Elders observe in us, a renewed trust in the Office of the Ministry, along with a respect of that Office.
- + [SLIDE # 14] We are – even now – being renewed in our mission and purpose with the joyful conversations surrounding being a people of God who live “up, in and out.”
- + I believe we’ve grown in what it means to be disciples. We are not simply fans of a game. We are not “volunteers.” We are (disciples) ... disciples of the Lord Jesus, even now being transfigured/transformed by the gifts of the Gospel.

Yes, I’ve noticed a change.

Have you?

Even as we stand, therefore, “before God with unveiled faces, clothed in the shining garment of Christ’s righteousness, and reflecting to the world the glory of the transfigured Christ.” (Lobien, 50)

[SLIDE # 15] This is what Jesus did. This is who Jesus redeemed us to be:

TRANSFIGURED TO TRANSFORM. *Amen.*

*[Friday E-mail:]* And so, we come what is celebrated in the Church's calendar as the Festival of Our Lord's Transfiguration. Where, this Sunday marks the end of the Epiphany season (dedicated to revealing who the babe of Bethlehem is), and bringing us to the doorstep of the season of Lent (dedicated to what Jesus has ultimately come to do – namely to rescue us from sin, death and hell by His death and resurrection). Here we catch a glimpse of the Savior who intently *"sets His face to Jerusalem."* Where, for the disciples, it would be a great place to camp out a while – avoiding the hard road ahead. *"It is good for us to be here,"* Peter remarks. But the disciples cannot remain there. Jesus has a mission to accomplish – the very salvation of the world.

Let us also rejoice to be here. Yet, also with the realization that with news that good, we can't stay. Sure, our times of worship and the study of God's Word are a respite – times both to heal, and to strengthen our spiritual muscles. As both a hospital and a gym, coming to God's Word prepares us for life in the world – of living Jesus out in the places where *"we live, move and have our being."* However, we cannot remain, as the Light of the world is a Savior *for* the world, whose light and salvation we are given to reflect. The disciples will soon learn this. But we already know, for God has, as Paul says, *"shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

So welcome to the Light. We will need it as we travel the darker road of Lent – of repentance, sin, suffering and death. But what better way to walk in these latter days than with the Light of Christ, and the Good News of His love to fill the crevices of our lives and to light our path. Where having received that Light, we now get to reflect and *be* the light of Christ in the world. Transformed, we are called to transform. There is no greater privilege. There is no greater joy. SYOS