

Transfiguration A (3/6/11 – *The Law, the Prophets, and the Glory of God
Are Revealed in the Cross of Christ*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

What could be more glorious? What better way to end the *Season of Epiphany* than with *The Transfiguration of Our Lord*!? Events like *The Baptism of Our Lord*, the changing of water to wine at Cana, Jesus' insightful, authoritative preaching in His *Sermon on the Mount* – and many others ... even miraculous healings – seem to pale, quite literally, in view of the glory revealed in Christ there on the mount of His *Transfiguration*.

And yet, I say, even **this Epiphany** event pales in comparison to what our Savior reveals in the very last verse of our *Gospel* text.

But I get ahead of myself. We need to go back to the mountain and understand just what it is that God would teach Peter, James, John, and **us** by the glorious *Transfiguration* of the Incarnate Son.

St. Matthew tells us that *The Transfiguration of Our Lord* took place *after six days* [17.1]. That is important, actually. Six days after *what*? Six days after Peter confessed that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God* [16.16]. Six days after Peter forbade Jesus to *go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised* [16.21]. Jesus is heading to Jerusalem – to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of the world. He Who is the Christ, the living Son of the living God, will die for the sins of the whole world – but on the third day He will arise to life again ... forever.

In the fullness of God-given faith, Peter believes in and confesses Jesus as the Messiah. Yet in the weakness of the flesh, Peter also denies the Lord His saving work ... and here at the *Transfiguration* makes a faulty confession. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The soul believes and confesses but the tongue utters nonsense. *Lord, it is good that we are here. If You wish, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah.* [17.4] Peter spoke before his brain was engaged – or at least ... before it was enlightened by a right understanding.

We understand Peter. We are “two peas in a pod” as they say – “cut from the same cloth” as it were. We, too, believe and confess. Yet in a rash moment, our sinful flesh moves our thoughts, or words, or deeds to utter nonsense ... make a false confession ... deny Christ and His saving work. We desire to hold on to the Law – represented by Moses there on the Mount – as if we could live by it, fulfill it ... as if it could be a source of real righteousness for us, before God. We look at the promises of the Prophets – represented by Elijah – but forget the reality that is ***Jesus only*** [17.8]. Do we really want, like Peter, to hold on to the Law and the Prophets – as if they were of equal importance with Christ?

St. Paul calls the Law merely a ***tutor*** or ***guardian*** until Christ Himself should come – ***but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian*** [GAL 3.24-25]. The flesh needs the Law, so that it shall know what God demands of us ... how we should live out our Christian lives – and where we have fallen short ... and thus are in need of a Savior. I suppose we could say the same for the Prophets. They pointed to the coming of the Anointed One Who would fulfill the Law for us, and bring into place the superseding New Covenant by His Blood. But now that the Christ has come – and in our text was heading out to accomplish His saving work by His Cross – we no longer look to those prophets.

The Law and the Prophets – together with the entire sacrificial system and worship-life of the Temple – were temporary. The permanency belongs to ***Jesus alone***. The Old Testament was a shadow. The brilliant light is Christ alone. There **cannot** be three tents. God – Christ – demands our full attention. He alone must be – and ever remain alone – the center of our attention ... our heart’s sole focus and only desire. God would not accept the placing of idols before His people. He did not tolerate idols in His Temple. He will not share your heart with anything else – not even your keeping of His holy Law. ***And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only*** [17.8].

Notice that Peter was so (sinfully) off-base, that God essentially had to shut him up in mid-thought: ***He was still speaking***, our text says, ***when,***

behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." [17.5] And what is it that Jesus said previously, to which we must listen? What does He now say? *Rise, and have no fear ... and ... Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.* [17.7, 9] Jesus will now *go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised* [16.21] – just as He said six days earlier. And it is specifically because of this that Jesus' disciples – including you and me – may *Rise, and have no fear.*

Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God **must** go to Jerusalem ... and there suffer, die, and resurrect. That is Who He is. That is why He came. This great *Transfiguration Epiphany* is designed both to strengthen our Lord for the task before Him and to reveal to His disciples this glorious truth – about both Jesus and His work of salvation. It is by way of His Cross that the Son of God will fulfill all that has been given through the Law and the Prophets. In this way, Jesus will glorify both His Father and Himself. Jesus is glorified by saving His fallen creation from the condemnation of the holy Law – not by abolishing it, but by fulfilling it completely and perfectly for us and for our salvation. Jesus glorifies the Father by declaring us righteous before the Father – since He Himself has fulfilled all righteousness and has covered us with the Blood of His Covenant, just as the Prophets foretold.

How can we be certain this is the right understanding? Let the Scriptures – the *more sure, prophetic* word [2PET 1.19] – speak and enlighten us. When some God-fearing Greeks – who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover – asked to see Jesus, St. John tells us that our Lord responded: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ... Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? "Father, save Me from this hour"? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. "Father, glorify Your Name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* [JN 12.23-24, 27-28]

The Lord's greatest glory is not the unveiled power of His Law (as given to Moses on Mount Sinai). It is not merely the promises of deliverance and liberation through His Prophets (like Elijah). It is not even *The Transfiguration of Our Lord* that Peter, James, and John beheld there on the unnamed Mount. Rather, the Lord's greatest glory is that He transfigures the status of the whole world of sinners by shedding His Blood on the Cross there on Mount Calvary – thus reconciling us to God.

It is there on Calvary's Cross – our focus especially during the *Season of Lent* we are about to begin this *Ash Wednesday* – that the glory of the forgiveness-working love of God shines forth in all its unbridled brilliance. There on the Cross, we see *Jesus only*. At the Cross we have the ultimate *Epiphany* of God's love for His Fallen Creation. The beloved Son pleases the Father yet again by suffering the rejection we have earned ... by receiving the wrath we deserve ... by dying the death we should die – all in our place ... all for us and for our salvation!

But this is not a remembrance only. That **you** may know the glory of Jesus' death and resurrection, the Savior brings His fulfillment into your lives – here and now. Like Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John, and the elders of Israel, you behold God ... and eat and drink [EXO 24.11]. Indeed, more than the Mount of Transfiguration, you see the glory of Christ – as He delivers to you His completed work of your salvation ... in Word and Sacrament.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Glory of God Are Revealed in the Cross of Christ! From the Cross the words of the Psalmist in our *INTROIT* for this day are fulfilled: *The LORD is great in Zion; He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome Name! Holy is He! The King in His might loves justice. You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.* [PSA 99.2-4] Indeed, by His work on the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ has established equity and executed justice and righteousness for **all** people. And in this way the holy Name of our God has been glorified for all eternity.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]