

Shine, Jesus, Shine... A message about the Transfiguration of our Lord

23/2/20

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

O God of truth and mercy,

Whose voice we miss

amidst the distractions and noise of our lives,

penetrate to the core of our being,

that we may hear and be glad,

knowing ourselves accepted in your love,

and able once again to live

in your truth and obedience,

through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

Amen.

Whilst preparing for this sermon over the last few days, I began to wonder if I also had any “out-of-this-world” experiences in my life...

I suddenly recalled how, during my theological training days at Rhodes University many years ago, I was once asked to house sit an old rambling manse that was being used by a married student for the ministry. Once evening had fallen, I checked that all the windows and doors were locked and chose one of the children’s bedrooms to sleep in. After a while I noticed an eerie glow coming through the curtains. The glow was in the shape of a luminous disc. I was convinced that this was an UFO of some sort! It took a while for me to pluck up the courage to peek behind the curtain into the garden, only to find a luminous Frisbee perched on the window sill! It took me many years until I told anybody about my UFO experience...

Today, in most Christian Churches, we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration. The meaning of the word “transfiguration” is a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state.

In the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Christian Church commemorates the occasion where Jesus Christ took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, up on a mountain, where Moses and Elijah appeared and Jesus was transfigured, with His face and clothes becoming dazzlingly bright.

This festival celebrates the revelation of the second person of the Trinity, which was normally veiled during Christ’s life on Earth. According to tradition, the event took place on Mount Tabor.

Why is the Transfiguration so important for us as Christians?

There are various aspects to this answer that I would like to explore briefly this morning:

Firstly, we are told in the Gospel of Matthew 17: 2 how the face of Jesus shone like the Sun and his clothes became as white as light. This is no ordinary person. This is the Son of God who is not only man but also divine in being and spirit. Jesus shines as the power of His Father and the Holy Spirit fills Him with love, power and strength for the mission that lay ahead, His eventual crucifixion and death. The Gospel details this event in no uncertain terms to remind the reader of the divine mission that this divine person holds. He is no mere mortal, but the Son of God who is to be worshipped and respected.

Secondly, we are told in Verse 3 how Moses and Elijah were seen to be talking with Jesus during this special event. Why would the Gospel authors include such detail? The presence of Moses and Elijah is essential in order to show how the revelation of Jesus was a fulfilment of the Old Testament and what the prophets had foretold. Moses and Elijah, both powerful leaders and Men of God during their time, lend strong credibility to the ministry of Jesus and remind the Gospel reader of how Jesus is the completion of the Old Testament story.

Thirdly, in Verse 5, we hear the voice of the Father saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” These words remind us that through Jesus the Kingdom of God is present in all its glory and might. Ignore the words of the Father and His Son at your own peril.

What does the Transfiguration of our Lord mean for you and me in our daily lives?

Well, the Transfiguration was a special event in which God allowed certain apostles to have a privileged spiritual experience that was meant to strengthen their faith for the challenges that they would later endure.

In the same way, there are times that you and I, whether we realise it or not, shine with the radiance of our Lord in us, so that we can make a difference to others. Perhaps it is something we say, or something we do that makes a powerful witness to those around us. You see, occasionally, the Lord uses our wisdom, humility and actions to serve His purpose in our community. This then becomes our moment to shine for His glory and his glory only, not ours. When we shine for Christ, we shine for the Kingdom of God. When we shine for ourselves, all we are doing is actually polishing our own egos.

When we occasionally shine for Jesus, we need to remain a true servant of His grace, for these experiences give us a glimpse into the joy of heaven, as we make a difference in the Kingdom of God.

How then do I get to shine for Jesus?

By following the basic spiritual disciplines of praying, fasting, reading the Bible and worshipping with your Christian community and most all, making a difference in the lives of those around you. We might not have the power of Jesus, but we can let the power of Jesus work in and through our lives so that we can be His body and His spirit in the world around us. All of us, as Christians, can have a small taste of the Transfiguration of Jesus, if we allow His Holy Spirit to work in us.

In conclusion, we understand that the Transfiguration makes clear that the Old Covenant of the Old Testament is abolished because Jesus fulfilled the law. Prophecy has also reached its goal with the establishment of the New Covenant in Jesus. Now grace is at the centre, no longer Moses and Elijah, but

Christ alone. In the course of the Transfiguration, Jesus is confirmed here by God the Father as the One to whom the law and the prophets testify, as the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world.

For us, as Christians, our process of transfiguration begins when we open the darkened places in our hearts to His brilliant light as best as we can. We do this when we pray for both ourselves and one another. We do this when we seek the will of God in our lives. We do this when we seek to forgive one another for any hurt or wrongs that may have been done to us. We do this when we allow the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives. We do this when we choose to make an active positive difference in the world around us. We do this when we finally become totally dependent on His grace in our lives and His grace alone, for we remain broken and fallen.

So if we wish to be part of the Transfiguration of Jesus, then we are called to take part in the life and story of Jesus. By doing this, His light shall in turn become our light...

I am very much reminded of the beautiful words of the song titled, "Shine Jesus Shine" written by Graham Kendrick.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3iB30gCqAc>

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me

*Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness

Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Amen.