

Rev. Danny Mackey  
The Transfiguration of Our Lord  
February 10, 2019  
Matthew 17:1-9  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

*And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light (v2).*

Transfiguration. The Greek term is “metamorphosis.” The point is that the internal reality is revealed outwardly. In other words, in being transfigured, everyone on the outside sees what’s going on in the inside of a person. That’s what’s happening with Jesus in our lesson: He is revealed as God to His disciples. Peter had already confessed the truth of Jesus’ divinity in the chapter right before. Now Jesus shows them the truth of it by shining with the glory of the Lord.

Still, there are two things that our lessons point out—if we want to understand fully what’s going on. First, the Father says, *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”* The Father affirms the confession that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. This is most certainly true. Second, Jesus commands Peter, James and John, *“Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”* Here we see that the transfiguration of our Lord is connected to the resurrection of our Lord on Easter morning.

An ancient Christian symbol of the resurrection is the butterfly. As we all know, though, the butterfly wasn’t always a butterfly; it was first a caterpillar. That caterpillar looks nothing like the beautiful and graceful butterfly. It plods and inches its way along the ground, while the butterfly catches the breezy air with its beautifully multicolored wings. And as our children know, the caterpillar must first wrap itself in a cocoon, rest, and then transform, change, morph.

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus was much the same, wasn’t it? He came as a man, lowly and humble, like the caterpillar. He died and was wrapped in burial clothes—like the cocoon. However, after His rest, He was raised, transformed from an earthly body (that is, a body with all the weaknesses and infirmities we too experience) and into a spiritual body. This spiritual body is a true body, with flesh and blood. Yet it is also a perfect body, a body without defect or blemish, a body not subject to the effects of sin and death—an immortal and glorious body.

The transfiguration of our Lord revealed His future glory to the disciples of the resurrection. As Peter himself writes, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” In the transfiguration, they beheld Jesus’ majesty; the metamorphosis of Jesus revealed who and what He truly is to Peter, James, and John. They wouldn’t fully understand it until the resurrection. Moreover, God’s word “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” wouldn’t be proven until Easter morning. We know that God the Father is pleased with Jesus because He raised Jesus from the dead.

We have also been transfigured; we have been transfigured in Christ. By becoming man, Jesus took on our sinful and fallen condition. God the Father first spoke the words “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” at Jesus’ Baptism. Then, at our Baptism, the Father spoke the same words about each of us—that’s when we were transfigured. We who went to the font as sinners came from our Baptism as saints. We went through a metamorphosis in those sacred waters, given the future promise of being raised to a new and wondrous existence. Our heavenly Father beholds us as transfigured in His Son.

We will be transfigured in future. On the Last Day, we will be transfigured, changed, metamorphosed when we are raised from the dead. And this transformation will be revealed not just for the Father and the heavenly host to behold, but also for all the earth to behold. Most of this world won’t comprehend this truth until the Last Day, when all flesh will stand before Jesus our Lord. Every human ever to live will behold with his own eyes what Peter, James, and John saw on that holy mountain. They will see Jesus. They will see our Lord Jesus in all His majesty and power. Revelation, chapter 1, describes Him this way: “One like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters...from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength” (vv13-16).

And to those who believed in Him, to us His saints by His grace, this almighty, all-powerful, omnipotent Jesus will reach out His right hand of blessing. He will say to us, as He said to His three disciples on that holy mountain, “*Rise, and have no fear.*” “You have been transfigured in Me. You, who once were a sinful human being, have been changed into a

blessed saint. Through My death and resurrection, you have gone through a metamorphosis, becoming what you truly are—holy and righteous. In Me, you are also God’s beloved child, with whom He is well pleased. In your own body, behold with all the world what I have accomplished in you.” So says Jesus. Listen to Him.

In His name.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.