

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Today we celebrate again the Transfiguration of our Lord. You heard the description of this marvelous event in the life of our Lord. Jesus went up on a mountain with Peter, James, and John; Luke says He went there to pray. And while there, Jesus was transfigured before them, that is, he changed in appearance. He began to radiate with the Divine glory that was His from eternity, radiating this glory through the flesh that He took into His person by His incarnation, shining even through His clothes. What He had kept hidden so well — His Divine glory — He let peek out.

It wasn't at His nativity, you remember. On that occasion, "*the glory of the Lord*" didn't radiate forth from the infant Jesus, illuminating the Holy Family, but from the angel of the Lord, illuminating the shepherds. And you remember, it terrified the shepherds. So it was here on the holy mountain. Jesus manifested His Divine glory, and it terrified the disciples ... understandably, after all, sinners rightly tremble in the presence of a holy God. Moreover, the Lord had told even Moses, who had asked to see His glory: "*you cannot see my face ... and live*" (Exodus 33:20). The disciples saw the terrible display, yet it was good for them to be there; they had not died!

What a wonderful way to conclude this Season of Epiphany! What greater display of "God in man made manifest" (LSB394) could we imagine? The Evangelist John bears witness to it ... much later, of course, because the three disciples were told not to tell anyone until after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. John testified: "*we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). And Peter does, too, in His second Epistle: "*we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain*" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Yes, it's a fitting way for us to conclude the Season of Epiphany and prepare ourselves for the somber, penitential Season of Lent. It's good for us to be here, too. We have ascended the mountain with Jesus, and we have been made earwitnesses of Jesus' majesty; the Father's voice from the cloud still rings in our ears. We have been readied for our 40 day trek down this mountain and up another — up to Mount Calvary.

It may seem odd to need to be prepared for the preparatory season of Lent, but this marvelous epiphany does help us along the way. It sets before our eyes first who Jesus is. Though He has our flesh, His person is the eternal, only-begotten Son of God, and we are assured by it. He will not be defeated, regardless what is

thrown at Him. It's as if Jesus, shining forth in dazzling white, is saying to us: "I've got this."

But this is not as a braggadocious statement by our modern, self-assured athletes — they can still be disappointed; they can still lose. But with Jesus, we have nothing to worry about. We must not lose heart. Jesus had already defeated the enemy on his wilderness battlefield; He mopped up the devil's minions — unclean spirits and demons. Now, He has one more battle to fight. "Peter, James, John, I have already told you: *'the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed,'* but then, *'after three days [He will] rise again'* in victory. The outcome is assured. Let not your hearts be troubled. I've got this!" (Mark 8:31).

Yet, Jesus doesn't fight and win for His own sake, but for ours, that we might be declared righteous before Him, that one day we might stand before Him at the judgment and hear His comforting words: "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom ...*" (Matt. 25:34). Yes, this "*glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" is a light that shines "*in our hearts*" and gives us "*the light of the knowledge*" of our victory in Christ Jesus.

Second, this epiphany instructs us about what that victory that follows the cross will be like. Surely, the divine Son of God has risen victorious from the dead, but so shall we, who follow after Him in faith. To be sure, on the last day, God will "raise me and all the dead," but He will only "give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ (Luther, Apostles' Creed, Third Article). There is a "*glory that is to be revealed to us*" believers (Rom. 8:18).

For us who look to Jesus, after death the glory awaiting us is the glory of a body raised back up in immortality and incorruption. What Jesus shows by His resurrection, and here by His transfiguration, is what lies ahead of us. St. Paul says it explicitly: "*our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself*" (Philippians 3:20–21).

As Jesus is transfigured, the great prophet Elijah and the Lawgiver Moses join Jesus and speak to Him. We heard in the Old Testament lesson how Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind, but Moses ... we know that Moses died without having entered into the promised land. But the Transfiguration here tells us ... he got to the promised land, for death is not annihilation for us who believe; it's the gate of life immortal. The presence of these two believers reminds us that "*though [we] die, yet shall [we] live, and everyone who lives and believes in [Jesus] shall never die*" (John 11:25–26), because of Jesus, because of His cross, because of His

resurrection, because believing in Him our sins are forgiven us, and we are accounted righteous in His eyes, and in that righteousness, we can stand before God on judgment day without fear, knowing that we will receive the fullness of Jesus' promise, the fullness of our inheritance.

In the meantime, in this life, we will surely say and do foolish things, like Peter did on the mountain. Whatever he might have meant by "*Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,*" it was a foolish thing to say, as Mark writes: "*he did not know what to say.*" We might want to keep in mind the saying, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt" (Robert Siegel and Connor Donevan, "'Hemingway Didn't Say That' (And Neither Did Twain Or Kafka)," on All Things Considered, April 4, 2017, [npr.org](http://npr.org)).

Like the disciples, we will become frightened at times, fearing the unknown, fearing pain and suffering, fearing death. Dear friends, repent . . . yes, in these upcoming forty days of Lent, but as Luther taught, throughout your life. Cast off your fear. Jesus, the Son of God in your flesh, is your Savior, crucified for you, risen for you; He has done it all for you. Trust in Him and His cross, trust His forgiveness for you, and the majestic glory displayed at His transfiguration will be yours for eternity.

God grant it,

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.