

Transfiguration

Sunday, February 23, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of
Marshalltown, Iowa

Scripture: 2 Peter 2:19 "and so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;..."

Introduction: what to do when lost in the dark

You need prayer and the Bible like you need a strong light in a dark cave. I remember going on a tour in a cave in which the guide turned off the lights briefly. I literally could not see my hand in front of my face. Eyesight was absolutely useless. It was completely impossible to get one's bearings in the all-consuming darkness of that cave, and I would have never made my way out if the guide had not turning on the lights after a few seconds. It was telling. Scriptures speak of an all-pervasive darkness of the soul, not discerned by human eyes, but without a light we become as lost as I was in that cave. Repeatedly, we read that the light for that kind of darkness is the wisdom of the Scriptures, even more so than experience. And this is confirmed by a man coming to the end of his days on earth recalling an experience so profound that we can barely comprehend it.

"until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;..."

Peter remembers, at the end of his life on earth, the Transfiguration of Jesus, who demonstrated His glory in a manner similar to Moses. In fact, Moses, along with Elijah, was with Jesus during His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5). The presence of Moses in the great event would harken back to Sinai, where Moses went up to meet God on behalf of the people as they were too frightened by the Presence of the Lord. He returned with the glory of God shining on his face. Unfortunately, the glory faded from Moses, but the glory of Jesus did not fade, but was merely hidden (Exodus 20:18-21; 2 Corinthians 3:13). Peter, I suspect, would be well aware of all this, but it was not the experience that buoyed him in his final days, but the Scripture the experience endorsed. That

was the anchor of his soul that was like a light that shines in a dark place and caused the morning star to rise in his heart.

We don't get our personal Transfiguration, but the phrase refers to a spiritual process by which the Holy Spirit uses the Word to enlighten the soul.

That phrase, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts" is a pregnant phrase describing a spiritual process that reflects the day of Christ's return. The "morning star" is a symbol for hope and a reference to Christ Himself (Numbers 24:17). Theologians have written that the prayerful study of Scripture not only instructs the student, the student is changed by the process. He becomes a person with a deeper faith, a richer prayer life, more discerning of himself and life. We have, and become, light in the darkness by this process.

Application

You don't have to take advantage of every opportunity prayerfully to study Scripture, but be sure you take advantage of something. Reading plans, one of the Bible Studies the church has, Bible Study Fellowship (some of our church members participate in this), all sorts of Bible Study guidebooks on any number of subjects. The Bible is food for the soul, and an anchor against the challenges of life that goes deeper than even the most profound experiences.

Conclusion

There is a darkness to life that is spiritual but just as dark as that dark cave I experienced years ago. Fortunately, we have the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit uses to instruct and change us, serving as a sort of light in the darkness as we make our way through this life. Peter, whose experience with Jesus included the profound events in the Transfiguration, still trusted in the Scriptures to help him during his ministry, and it was the wisdom of those Scriptures that helped him to stand strong during the last days of his journey here on earth.

- SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS Children's Sermon on the Transfiguration of Jesus from Luke 9:28-36

- Object Lesson Items: Prescription eye glasses
- Scripture Passage: Luke 9:28-36 it's also in Matt. 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13
- Directions in italics – spoken lesson in regular font.

You are welcome to teach directly from this lesson, but we recommend putting the message in your own words. Remember, eye-contact is much more important than exact wording.

Transfiguration of Jesus Children's Sermon

Greet the children as they sit down around you, saying how you are happy they have come...

Hold up your pair of prescription eye glasses

Can anyone tell me what these are? *Allow for responses ...*

Can anyone tell me why I need to wear them? *Allow for responses ...*

That's right – I need to wear these to see things how they really are – my eyes aren't perfect, but these change the way I can see things so I can know what is real.

In our Bible reading today we heard about the Transfiguration of Jesus. Transfiguration is a big word that means change – Jesus change the way the disciples could see him so they would know what was real.

One time, Jesus went up a tall mountain with some of his disciples to pray.

It was late at night, so everyone was getting very sleepy. Can you show me your sleepy faces? *Allow a moment for the kids to demonstrate a sleepy face ...*

Good job – that's how the disciples looked, but then something happened that made them wide awake. Can you show me your wide-awake faces? *Allow a moment for the kids to demonstrate a wide-awake faces ...*

Exactly right – something very surprising happened. They saw a change come over Jesus and his clothes became shiny white. It was different than anything they had ever seen!

But then something else happened. Can you make show me those surprised faces again? *Allow a moment for the kids to demonstrate a surprised faces ...*

They saw two men from the Bible, Moses & Elijah, who had gone to heaven a very long time before. They showed up and started talking to Jesus about what the special work Jesus was going to do when he got to Jerusalem.

Just then a cloud came down and covered everyone and the disciples became afraid. Can you show me your afraid faces? *Allow a moment for the kids to demonstrate afraid faces ...*

Good job – that's exactly how the disciples felt. Something amazing was happening and they were very confused until they heard a voice from the cloud say, "THIS IS MY SON, LISTEN TO HIM."

Can anyone tell me who's voice that was? *Allow a moment for responses ...*

That's right – it was the voice of God making sure they understood that Jesus was his son. Then the cloud disappeared and only Jesus was there. After that, they always looked at Jesus a little different because they saw how things really were.

This story is like my glasses (point back to your eyeglasses). They help me see what's real and Transfiguration showed the disciples what was real about Jesus. It shows us what is real about Jesus.

Jesus is God's one and only Son. He looked like a normal person, but he was really someone very special. God wants us to listen very carefully to all the words of Jesus in the Bible.

Let's pray together, you can copy after me. *After each line in the prayer, allow a moment for the children to repeat.*

