

022722 "Transfiguration" Luke 9:28-36

Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. Traditionally, on Ash Wednesday, a pastor draws a cross with ashes on people's foreheads and says, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." "Repent, and believe the Gospel." And from Ash Wednesday to April 17, Easter, the 40 days, except Sunday, are called "Lent" in Christianity. The number 40 in the Bible has a special meaning. In the Old Testament, Moses fasted for 40 days to receive the Ten Commandments, and the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness before entering the land of Canaan. In the New Testament, Jesus fasted and prayed for 40 days before Jesus' public ministry, and 40 days after his resurrection Jesus was ascended.

Lent visits every year... Why do we need Lent? We're really busy and our lives are so complicated. If you look at the news these days, there are so many news that make our hearts heavy. In times like these, when our hearts are also easily torn to pieces, we enter Lent again. Lent is here to bring our scattered eyes back toward the cross of Jesus and the love of God.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, in this Lent season, I hope that we will look to Jesus seriously again, who silently went to the cross to save those who believe in him. I earnestly pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that it will be a time to meditate on the path of sacrifice that Jesus walked and pray together that we may follow the path that He walked!

It is "Transfiguration Sunday" according to the calendar of the church, to refer to the transfiguration of Jesus. In the New Testament, the Transfiguration of Jesus is an event where Jesus is transfigured and becomes radiant in glory upon a mountain. This event is written in Matthew, Mark, and Luke – indicating

its significance. As Lent begins soon, it is special to meditate on the Transfiguration of Jesus because Lent is not just about meditating on the sufferings of Jesus, but also on changing, transforming, or renewing "our lives."

If we look at the whole Chapter 9 in Luke, Jesus sent the twelve disciples with ability and authority to proclaim the Kingdom of God. There was the miracle of five loaves of bread and two fish. There was also the confession of faith of Peter. And then there was this transfiguration. After this, Jesus cured a demon-possessed child. As the miracles continued, the disciples start to argue who amongst them is the greatest; they could see that Jesus was really getting popular among the masses, and expected that His Kingdom will be realized on Earth soon – in which case, they wanted to know, who will be second, third, and fourth to Jesus.

So, verse 28 starts with: "About eight days after Jesus said this..." 'This' here refers to Peter's Confession of Faith and The Prediction of Jesus' Crucifixion. Jesus went to a mountain with Peter, James, and John. Actually, Jesus went to the mountains quite often – to pray, to rest, or to teach. But this time it was very special. Many Biblical scholars believe the "high mountain" mentioned in the account of the transfiguration was Mount Hermon or Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor is 1,886 feet high and Mount Hermon is 9,232 feet high. You see, the place mentioned in the Bible today is not a small hill-level mountain. Literally, on a high mountain, Jesus took them up. Then, why did Jesus take them to such a high mountain?

Even after proclaiming their faith in Jesus as their Lord and savior, the disciples faltered as soon as they heard about the cross, suffering, and death. In Matthew 16:23, after Peter's confession of faith, there is a scene where Jesus rebuked Peter. "But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You

are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Sound familiar? How many times do we falter because of our own human thoughts, even after we confess loving Jesus and commit to living for his glory? How often do we think about our own concerns rather than those of God?

Peter reflects all of us. Sometimes, we feel that our faith is greater than everybody else's. We're so proud of how faithful we are. But then, all of a sudden, we face ourselves and feel ashamed at our lack of faith. But what's important is that Jesus took this weak Peter to the mountain. Jesus knew that Peter had his weaknesses, but did not give up on him. Jesus wanted to train him well and make him a precious vessel of God.

I heard an interesting story before. What do Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus have in common? They play golf pretty well. In fact, they are called the best golfers! But I heard they're always followed by the swing coach. Did you know that? Even the best player needs a coach! Even though the coach may not be as good as the players, the best thing is to keep learning the swings over and over again. That's why the coach always corrects the mistakes!

In a sense, I think the life of faith is the same. No matter how long you have been in the church or how long is your mother's faith, we must always examine our own lives based on the Word of God and move forward. It is the true Christian way to live a life changed by the inspiration of the Word of God.

Peter was a man who did not have much, but he was the one who had specially assisted Jesus. The amazing event of Mt. Transfiguration today is the experience of only three of Jesus' disciples. So, if he's like me, wouldn't he want to be treated well by traveling around the world, talking about his special experience, boasting, 'I'm a person who had such a special experience!'

I've had special spiritual experiences in my life through which I have experienced the Lord. I've heard stories like this before. Spiritual experiences are like signs or signposts. It's not the sign that matters, it's important that you go where the sign is pointing. But in many cases, people focus on the experience itself, and it's easy to become obsessed with that experience. Experience is important, but we must not cling to it, we must move on. We have to head to the place the experience points to, the cross of Jesus that the sign guides us to.

What happened the day after Jesus performed a five-bread-two-fish miracle? The people who experienced the miracle came to Jesus and wanted to see the miracle again. Once we experience it, we must believe that God is alive and move forward. However, we may end up wanting more and more without moving forward. Something like tolerance happens. When the Israelites ate manna in the wilderness, initially they were surprised to say, "what is it?" (Manna means "what is it".) As they ate the manna every day, the gratitude disappeared. As time passed, the excitement faded.

If you keep taking medicine, your body will become resistant. Same medicine, same amount doesn't work. Soon the doctor may say 'there is no cure anymore.' The experience is important, but the experience becomes powerless. Then what? So what should we do?

Verse 36 says, "When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen." This shows us that Jesus was the only one remaining standing next to them. All the enchanting scenes disappeared and only Jesus was seen in their eyes. Similarly, Jesus is the only one who will stand by us until the

very end. The fact that all these mysterious and heavenly things Peter saw disappeared in a moment, and only Jesus remained standing is very important!

The prophecies and the law lead us to God to a certain extent. The law tells us that we are sinners, and the prophecies remind us that God is not only the God of the past, but also of the present and the future. But the one who will hold on to our hands and lead us into heaven is Jesus, and only Jesus. He will hold on to us even at the moment of death.

The three disciples wanted to remain in the holy place, but Jesus prayed and came down from the mountain to go forth into the world again. There, he carried out the works of salvation. We sometimes want to remain where we are. But the Lord tells us to move forward into what sometimes can be hectic and burdensome life. More precisely, he asks us to follow him and listen to him at the center of our lives.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, Lent is right in front of us. How are you preparing for Lent? If you haven't already done so, now is the time! I encourage you to start today. It was only for a moment that the disciples saw the glory of God at the mountain of transfiguration. But when the glorious moment disappeared, Jesus remained standing with them. What we need to pay attention to is transforming by the word of the Lord. Perhaps sometimes the Lord will lead us into a place of solitude and burden. But we have nothing to fear because he is with us and he will lead us on this journey together. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.