

## Luke 9:28-36

### The Transfiguration

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

### MESSAGE: Shiny People

Transfiguration. Shiny faces - shiny people. What’s it all about? Moses was shiny, Jesus was shiny. Icons and much medieval art portray holy people with a glow about their heads. Penny’s window, coming up the stairs, and our windows in here show shiny people as well. Except for that warrior and Ruth – maybe you have to be a saint or an angel to get the glow.

I also noticed that St Paul’s glow is red, which strikes me as odd. (Jack, Bruce) Although, as I think to many of the letters that he wrote to those early churches there is a fair bit of exasperation. Most of his writings have the basic message of ‘why don’t you stop competing and fighting with each other and start lifting one another up like you’re supposed to!’ Maybe Paul has a bit of an angry glow about him.

This glowing, this shininess – is it only something that we read about in the Bible, is it just symbolism, or is this a part of our lives today? Have you ever seen someone who is shiny, who is bright?

We often talk about pregnant women having a glow about them. Now, on some mornings when they are in the throes of morning sickness, that might be more of a sheen of sweat than a glow, but certainly there are times when we really can see a glow about them.

Have you ever met anyone who seems to have an inner light? It’s not that they necessarily are emitting light, and yet, there is something about them that is bright, that is clear – they brighten the room when they come into it.

We often see this in children, when they are so full of joy they can't contain it. Shiny faces. We see it in on another's at time – that light, that spark, the twinkle in the eye. Shiny.

This shininess, this glow, it always seems to be visible when people are so full of joy, of life, and of truth, that it can't be kept inside. It radiates out and fills the people around them as well. When we are with someone who is shining, we can't help but be lifted up as well. This joy, life and truth that brings on the shininess is the very presence of God. It is when we are aware of the presence of God that we become so filled that our cup overflows, and we shine for all the world to see.

Moses' face glowed when he came down from the mountaintop where he had been with God. His face glowed every time afterwards, whenever he had been with God in the tabernacle. It was almost like a proof, or a testament that he had spoken with God – a seal or a sign that what he was speaking to the people, he was not making up. God imprinted the truth on his face.

Jesus invited Peter, John and James up the mountain with him, and they saw Jesus, with his clothes whiter than anything they had ever seen, his face changed somehow, and they beheld his glory. Jesus was shiny. This is what we refer to as the transfiguration.

Was Jesus the only one on that mountaintop who was shining? Moses and Elijah were there – the text doesn't really say if they were also shiny and glowing so we don't know for sure. But it does lead us to some important questions: what exactly is transfiguration, and who all was transfigured on that mountain top?

Did Jesus suddenly light up and become something he was not? Did Jesus change? Or, could it be that the eyes of the disciples were healed or opened so that for the first time they could see Jesus as he always had been?

Jesus was, and is God. I don't think that Jesus was changed in the transfiguration, but rather he was revealed. The veil dropped for a moment.

It brings to mind a scene from the movie Bruce Almighty in which Jim Carey's character is speaking with God and prays about girlfriend saying something to the effect of 'I want her to find someone who will love her as I do, and who will always see her the way I see her right now, through your eyes.'

Sometimes we get to see people through God's eyes. The veil is lifted, and the person who previously appeared mundane, even mean or crass, is revealed to be a human being – beautiful and broken, all at the same time.

This change doesn't happen in the other person – they are still the same – the change happens in us. We get a little peek through God's eyes. I'm convinced that this is what happened on that mountaintop. Jesus was the same as he ever was – it was the disciples who were transformed. Their eyes were opened, their hearts softened.

The same thing happens to us – we become transfigured – transformed by the love of Jesus. We see through the eyes of God, and that perspective changes us deeply.

Where before we could only see despair, we see hope. Where there was anger, compassion: springs in the desert, a way where there was no way. Transformation and transfiguration are a way of life for us.

That's not to say that we all exist in a constant state of bliss and ecstasy. Jesus and the disciples came back down the mountain to re-engage with everyday life – difficult people, difficult journeys – actually, the very first encounter after the mountain was a particularly difficult demon.

We ought not to expect that we will live our lives on the mountaintop; food and water are found in the valleys after all. But, God gives us these mountaintop experiences to sustain us and encourage us. God uses these transformative experiences to empower us, and to enable us to spread the joy we receive to others.

Now, of course, the big question becomes 'how do we have these mountaintop experiences? How can we see others shine, and become shiny ourselves?'

The short answer is, we can't make it happen. Only God does that. But that doesn't mean that we have no part to play. In our transfiguration stories today, Moses had to climb a mountain. Jesus and his disciples climbed a mountain. That doesn't necessarily mean we have to get out all our rockclimbing gear to go up to meet God, but it's symbolic of placing yourself in a right place to wait for God.

Mountaintops are not convenient places to be. At the top of a mountain, especially large mountains, there is usually no water. No animals. No plants. No food. The top of a mountain can be a pretty desolate place, a place we don't normally make the effort to get to.

This tells us that getting to a mountaintop experience isn't something that just happens, nor is it convenient. We have to go out of our way, and put some effort into getting there. It is a conscious decision to place ourselves in the right place to meet God.

Coming to church this morning is one of those decisions. We come here to meet God, in our worship, and in his word. It's not easy or convenient to come here, especially on icy, snowy days, and especially when we have to round up small children and get them dressed and fed in time to get here. If we come here expecting to meet God, we generally will. If we have a seeking heart, we should all be glowing as we leave here today.

We also meet God when we intentionally set time aside for him. When we spend time on our own, reading the Bible, praying, listening and waiting on God – often he will make his presence known to us. We experience his love, his peace. And we glow. We shine.

When we pray with and for one another, Jesus is present. People begin to glow. I get that opportunity often – everybody likes the minister to pray for them – but praying together is something that we are all called to do. It's not hard; once you stop thinking of yourself and start thinking about the one you're praying for any inhibitions or apprehensions just fade away. And people become shiny; praying together especially places us in a position to be able to see one another through God's eyes.

Transfiguring mountaintop experiences are the natural result of our intentionally placing ourselves in God's path. This is exactly what Lent is all about – being intentional about our faith lives. It's about being reflective and introspective; assessing the way we live to determine which activities make us receptive to God's presence, and which activities are hindering God's movement in our lives.

Our goal as followers of Jesus is to place ourselves in a posture in which we will be able to receive the spirit of God. When we receive that spirit we will find that not only are we transformed, but we ourselves become transforming to others.

Not everyone you meet today will see Jesus. But every one of them will see you. Let your light shine. Be the light that cuts through the darkness. Bring your mountaintop experiences into the everyday world, and live as a witness to the transforming love of Jesus.

Amen.