

Today on the church calendar is Transfiguration Sunday. Bet you did not know that. This is the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday and Lent begins. Lent begins the period of 40 days excluding Sundays leading up to Easter Sunday.

Transfiguration Sunday is the day when we are invited to read one of the passages of Scripture which describe an experience when Jesus was transfigured or changed in the presence of some of his disciples. This event is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

All three accounts of the transfiguration are similar in the main details. We will read about Jesus going up a mountain with three disciples. Peter, James, and John. We will read that Jesus is changed before them. And we will read that Jesus encounters two characters from the Old Testament. These two characters are Moses and Elijah.

Traditionally Moses and Elijah have been interpreted to mean that they represent the law and the prophets from the Old Testament. Moses is the one that ascended a mountain in a very similar manner to this text that we are about to read.

In his epiphany with God, Moses received the law which includes what we commonly call the Ten Commandments. Elijah was a prophet from the Old Testament that called God's people into faithfulness during a period when they were not being faithful.

So, with this background in mind, let us now read this passage from Mark's version of this Transfiguration event.

Read Mark 9:2-9

Transfiguration can really be called transformation. And transformation is an attempt to help us see something from a different perspective. Transformation is about trying to look at something in a different way than we have looked at it before. Transformation is about trying to use the same data but coming to a different conclusion.

Every day we are exposed to attempts by people trying to transform us or manipulate us to see something from a different perspective than we used to. There are people in our culture who are trying their hardest and spending lots of money to transform us and change the way we see experiences in life.

Last Sunday was the annual pinnacle of when we are targeted for transformation. I want to show a clip of what I mean. As you watch this clip, ask yourself this question. "How are the people who paid for and created this advertisement trying to transform me?"

If you were watching the Super Bowl last Sunday, you were exposed to this attempt at transforming you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gGXnE1Dbh0>

Advertising is really about transformation. The advertisers are paid to try to get us to view situations from a different perspective. The makers of Tide and the advertisers they hired were brilliant, in my opinion, in this advertisement.

They have invited us to view every commercial that we are exposed to as a Tide commercial. They want us to focus on the clothes that people are wearing in commercials so that our brain will immediately connect these commercials with their product.

I am not a Tide spokesperson. Although, you will notice that I am wearing very clean clothes this morning that were washed in Tide. (ha/ha). No, I am here trying to provide some interpretation of a biblical text. A biblical text of transformation.

Transformation is never easy. I jokingly shared in my sermon title that the only ones who like a change are babies. Which is true. We are resistant to looking at issues in life from a different perspective. We prefer to maintain and affirm our own way of looking at life's situations.

But we have read a story in which Jesus is transfigured and changed in the presence of 3 of his closest disciples. So what kind of transformation are we invited into?

“In a memoir he penned, Donald Miller, a writer on Christian spirituality, describes traveling to Peru with friends to hike the Inka Trail. The trek began along a river in the Sacred Valley, and their guide pointed out that if they followed the trail that ran along the river, they would reach the very famous Inka citadel Machu Picchu in just six hours.

The guide explained that in ancient times, the river was the shortest route to the city. But those going to Machu Picchu on a spiritual pilgrimage had to take the Inka trail across the snow-covered Andes mountains. One of the hikers then asked the guide, “Why would the Inkas make people take the long route?”

The guide responded, “Because the emperor knew that the more painful the journey to Machu Picchu, the more the traveler would appreciate it once he or she got there.”

Many of us are on some painful journeys right now. Some of us are struggling with issues in our families. Parents are struggling with how to raise their children while young people are struggling with relating to their parents.

Some of us are struggling with trying to figure out who we are and where God is directing our lives. Some of us are feeling lost and alone. Some of us are facing some deep pain while others of us may be facing some recent setbacks.

Some of us are facing some very difficult challenges and we are not quite sure which direction to go. Like Peter in the story that we read we want something concrete that we can see and name. Like Peter we want to build something permanent.

Like Peter we want to say something even though we don't have a clue about what we want to say. Some of us are just feeling lost and alone and want something concrete and tangible.

But in the story that we read, the presence of God descends upon them like a shapeless cloud. A cloud overshadows all of them and a voice is heard in the cloud, "This is my Beloved, Listen to him." It is in the cloud that the voice of God is heard.

As much as we want something solid and tangible in our world, God chooses to be a God of shapeless clouds. Choosing to transform us during the painful and ambiguous times in our lives. God in the Scriptures seems to be very resistant to being pinned down. God prefers to move in shapeless ways.

So maybe our transformation means that we don't strive for permanence. Maybe transformation means that we strive to trust. To trust that in whatever cloud that we find ourselves in that God is using those moments to shape us into something closer to what God desires.

Maybe transformation for us means that we learn to give up a sense of needing to be in control but to trust that God will take care of it.

This week I was reading an article about the greatest female basketball player ever to come out of SC. Her name, as many of you know, is Ivory Latta. Ivory played at York Comprehensive High School, UNC, and then became a professional all-star in the WNBA. She was voted the best female high school player in the US the same year that some guy named Lebron James was voted the best male player.

One of her teammates was interviewed for this article about the night that Ivory Latta scored 70 points in a high school game and set the scoring record for SC. This teammate said this, "I ended up leading the region in assists the two years I played with Ivory because you pass the ball to her and she shoots, and it goes in."

That wise teammate is sitting up in the balcony this morning. I'll let you figure out who that is. But I realize that most people will probably assume that I am talking about Emily Wallace.

Transformation means that we learn that our role is to be the assist leader who constantly passes to God when we face pain and disorientation. Transformation for us means that we learn to trust God to deliver. AMEN.

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-Miller, Donald, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: How I Learned to Live a Better Story*, Nashville, 2009, p, 139-140

-Given: February 11, 2018 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)