

**Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, Transfiguration, August 6, 2023.**

Have you ever had a mountain top experience that changed you? Moses had one. On Mount Sinai, Moses talked with God. The encounter was so special that “the skin on the face of Moses was shining.” (**Exodus 34:29**) Others observed this condition. And though you and I weren’t there when Moses came down from the mountain, we read about the experience and continue to wonder about it.

Does the experience of Moses mirror our experience? Probably not, but maybe I’m speaking just for myself. But, even if we haven’t had a comparable mountain top experience, have we had an experience that we couldn’t explain? I suspect here the answer is “yes.”

And, if so, how did we respond? Did we share the experience to test it? Or did we keep it to ourselves, mindful that others might wonder about us if we did share it? I suspect that we kept the experience to ourselves. It’s who we are. We might do a lot of sharing in other realms, but not in religion.

But, even if we don’t share, we do wonder, don’t we? And that is not an accident. Again, curiosity is part of who we are. We wonder about all sorts of things, including whether there is a God or not.

Where does this curiosity come from? For us, in this setting, curiosity is a gift, that, if exercised, puts us in touch with our Creator. Not Mom and Dad. But the Big One, God Himself or Herself or Itself. Pick your pronoun. God answers to all, whatever the address.

One of the reasons we like Moses is because he gives us hope that we are not mere specs in the universe, but children of the Creator, a Creator who knows us one by one. This Moses assurance is the forerunner to the assurance that we recognize in Jesus. Jesus doesn’t just represent God. He is God. God responds to our curiosity by becoming one of us. An absolutely brilliant move on the part of the Creator.

Now, just to make clear, when we speak of The Trans-figuration, we are not speaking about the Creator changing from male to female or female to male. Rather, we are speaking theology, not biology.

No one knows for sure how things began or who or what began them and where things are headed and why. In the absence of certainty, we go with our best shot. And, for my money and yours – we’re here together – Holy Scripture is a powerful source. It tells a spectacular tale, one that has been tested many times and never surpassed. Yes, we can quibble over details, but do we really want to quibble over whether there was Someone or Something who triggered the whole enterprise? I don’t think so.

So let’s start there and explore and, as possible, explain. If we’re wrong, if we’re off base, so be it. But in the meantime, let’s do the best we can in understanding who and what and where we are, and go from there. That’s what Scripture does. And besides, do we really want to give up potluck suppers in the parish hall. Of course, not. So, we continue on this Sunday with what we do know.

From today’s Gospel (**Luke 9:33**): “Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here.’” Yes, Peter, it was good and it is good. How does Peter thank the Lord? Well, he wants to erect three tents: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Why? We’re not sure. Maybe it was expected hospitality. Maybe it was as simple as wanting to say thank you. And that’s okay. That’s what you and I do instinctively. “What can I do for you, Lord?” You need a tent? I’ll get you a tent.” Or, maybe, just maybe, Peter sensed that he might be in the company of the promised Messiah, and that anything Peter could do to honor the Messiah was appropriate and expected.

Good thinking on Peter’s part. “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!’” (**Luke 9:35**) And Peter and James and John did just that. And what was/what is the result of that listening? Here we are, exploring how we can help the Lord. What can we do – as individuals and as a community – to make the Lord and the whole creation more comfortable? What are our options for welcoming the Lord?

We know the answer, don't we. Share the Lord. It's a pretty simple transaction. God loves us, and tells us, through Jesus, that if we want to thank the Lord for this profound love, we need to do something loving for others. That's our homework.

From today's epistle (**2 Peter 1:21**), Peter reminds us of two critical components. "First of all, you must understand...." And second of all, you must share your understanding,

And, two thousand years later, we do so. Look at your record. You support organizations that help others. And you help others directly. You help neighbors and, yes, you help strangers. And, when you need help, it's there. It's community at its best.

And, here's the really important point. The more we help, the better we feel. There's a sense of doing what our Lord wants us to do and told us to do. We are fulfilling a calling. We are making the Lord's work our work. In a sense, we are transfigured. And we are proud of that and grateful for it.

And where do we express that pride and thanksgiving? Right here. We like being on the Lord's team. We like doing what we are meant to do. Things come together in really interesting and satisfying ways.

And that is no accident. It is rather the way things are meant to be. That feeling of being with the Lord, and yes, that feeling of being with one another. Certainly worth a thank-you gift of some sort. Maybe a dwelling. Maybe a tent. Maybe simply our very best effort.

Do you think that the Lord would be happy with a gift of our very best effort? Oh yes. I think the Lord would be, and is, very, very happy.

Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**  
**Pentecost 10 – The Transfiguration – August 6, 2023**

**Hymn 397 – Now thank we all our God**

Now thank we all our God, with heart, and hands, and voices,  
who wondrous things hath done, in whom his world rejoices;  
who from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us!  
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,  
the Son, and him who reigns with them in highest heaven,  
eternal, Triune God, whom earth and heaven adore;  
for thus it was, is now, and shall be, evermore.

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Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no  
secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy  
Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.*  
*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,*  
*we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*  
*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,*  
*you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;*  
*you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.*  
*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,*  
*you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,*  
*in the glory of God the father. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.  
Let us pray.

### **Collect for the Transfiguration**

O God, who on the holy mount revealed to chosen witnesses your well-beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening: Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may by faith behold the King in his beauty; who with you, O Father, and you, O Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and even. *Amen.*

### **First Reading – Exodus 34:29-35**

### **Psalm 99**

### **Second Reading – 2 Peter 1:13-21**

### **Hymn 627 – Lamp of our feet**

Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace our path when wont to stray;  
Stream from the fount of heavenly grace, brook by the traveler's way;

Bread of our souls, whereon we feed, true manner form on high;  
Our guide and chart, wherein we read of realms beyond the sky;

Pillar of fire, throughout watches dark, and radiant cloud by day;  
when waves would whelm our tossing bark, our anchor and our stay;

word of the ever living God, will of his glorious Son;  
without thee how could earth be trod, or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all a right to learn the wisdom it imparts;  
and to its heavenly teaching turn, with simple, child-like hearts.

### **Gospel – Luke 9:28-36**

### **Sermon**

The Rev. Charles Rowins

## Nicene Creed – page 358

*We believe in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again In accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen*

## **Prayers of the People Form IV – page 388**

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

## **Confession and Absolution – page 360**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.*

*We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

### **The Peace – page 360**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*And also with you.*

### **Announcements and Preparation of the Table**

#### **Eucharistic Prayer – page 361**

The Lord be with you.  
*And also with you.*  
Lift up your hearts.  
*We lift them to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise, you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:



*Holy, holy holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
*Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.  
*Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

### **Communion**

#### **Post Communion Prayer – BCP pge 365**

*Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, And you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## **Hymn 416 – For the beauty of the earth, stanzas 1-4**

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth over and around us lies,  
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light,  
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony lining sense to sound and sight,  
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild,  
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

### **Dismissal**

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
*Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!*

## Lessons for The Transfiguration – August 6, 2023

**Collect:** O God, who on the holy mount revealed to chosen witnesses our well-beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening: Mercifully grant that we, being, delivered from the disquietude of this world, may by faith behold the King in his beauty; who with you, O Father, and you, O Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **First Reading: Exodus 34:29-35**

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went into speak with him.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

### **Psalm 99**

The Lord is King; let the people tremble;  
*he is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth shake.*  
The Lord is great in Zion;  
*he is high above all peoples.*  
Let them confess his Name, which is great and awesome;  
*he is the Holy One.*  
“O mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity;  
*you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.*

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before his footstool;  
*he is the Holy One.*

Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among those who call up his  
Name,

*they called upon the Lord, and he answered them.*

He spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud;

*they kept his testimonies and the decree that he gave them.*

“O Lord our God, you answered them indeed;

you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds.”

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and worship him upon his holy hill;

*for the Lord our God is the Holy One.*

### **Second Reading: 2 Peter 1:13-21**

I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to refresh your memory, since I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

## **Gospel: Luke 9:28-36**

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 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. 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. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 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.

The Gospel of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*