

Weekend of Sunday, March 3, 2019
Transfiguration of Our Lord/Lectionary 6/Proper 6/Year C
Primary Text: Luke 9:28-43a
Secondary Texts: Exodus 34:29-35 & 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2
Sermon Title: “Enradiated!”

Theme

Witnesses to the glory of God in the face of Jesus will be unable to avoid reflecting that glory in the world. It was true for Moses. It was doubtless true for Peter, James, and John. We pray that it will be true of all of us who see the glory of the Lord in the word and in the supper and who are being “transformed into the same image” by the Spirit of God.

Text

²⁸Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now 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. ³³Just 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. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” ³⁶When 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. [

³⁷On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴²While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ^{43a}And all were astounded at the greatness of God.]

Sermon

The readings take us on an interesting journey this morning. The First Reading is from Exodus, and in it you heard how, when Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, he became *enradianted*. I think I coined that word "*enradianted*" because my spell checker didn't recognize it. According to my dictionary, adding the prefix "en-" to a word makes the word a verb. So, by *enradianted*, I mean that he became *radiant*, he is actively glowing. Now if you are an English teacher and I got that wrong, whack my knuckles with a ruler after Sunday service is over because I am sticking with it.

I don't know how long Moses was in God's presence this particular time but it was "long enough" as they say, to transform his presence, the way he appeared to the Israelites, once he rejoined them

After spending time with God, Moses was *enradianted*, he became radiant, his presence, his being – the very way he appeared to other people - was transformed. I am not aware of any other precedence for this phenomenon in scripture. Aaron, who was Moses brother, had never seen anything like it. And neither had any of the other Israelites. And so the text says, "they were afraid to come near him." His appearance was apparently so awesome that he took to wearing a veil over his face so that others could bear to look at him and communicate with him, which was important for a leader like Moses. The text also says that from that time on, at least for a while, Moses continued to wear the veil except for when he was in the presence of God.

Most of you know the story of Moses and his two trips up Mount Sinai to receive the two sets of stone tablets. After the first trip up the mountain, Moses himself destroyed the first set in a fit of rage over his people's loss of faith. I'm sure that that image was scary enough, but after his second trip up the mountain he one-ups himself and this time he has his people's full attention. Now the people were ready to listen.

The question that begs to be answered is this; if indeed we are spending time in the presence of God, how is our presence changed? Are we *enradianted*? Has our presence been transformed? Are we noticeably different because of our close and intimate relationship with the Holy God? And if not, then why not?

I'm a linear thinker and so if the three readings for today were on a timeline then the Gospel Reading happened next.

Jesus seemed to have an inner circle whom he was particularly fond of. That small inner-circle was Peter, James, and John. He chose them to go with him up a mountain. Sound familiar? Jesus went up to pray. Just why the other three went up is unclear, but some think it was all part of the divine plan for them to witness a most unusual event.

The text says that "as he (Jesus) was praying the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning." And while that was going on two men, who the witnesses clearly identify as Moses and Elijah, appeared in "glorious splendor, talking with Jesus."

Now we need to be careful to recognize that while the two men identified as Moses and Elijah do not appear in any expected, normal way – the text says "glorious splendor" - the witnesses have clearly indicated that their appearance was not the same wattage, if you will allow me to use that word here, as was Jesus' appearance. Jesus was clearly separated out as the brightest, most brilliant image on the mountaintop.

Moses represented the law, a person whom God chose to represent himself, after all the law was given as a gift by God to lead his people back into the close relationship God desired with his creation.

And Elijah represented the prophets, the next way God tried to reach his creation. The prophets were also a gift from God. They were used by God to be God's voice, calling them back into the loving relationship God desired with his people.

What Jesus represented was obviously unclear to Peter, James, and John. But they probably could have surmised, if they were able to think clearly at all, that he, Jesus, was a much bigger deal than was the other two just based on his far greater brilliance – and the other two were legends among the Jews.

But then there was the cloud that enveloped them, and then the disembodied voice, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Now we have the benefit of 2000 years of hearing and studying this story and so we can say profound things about what all this meant. But can you imagine being Peter, James or John? “Jesus, this man, or so we thought, is God’s son! What does this mean?”

Peter, who had the need to always say something, said something ridiculous about building shelters – much could be said about what he might have been thinking here but I don’t think that’s the issue. The issue here is the disclosure, in no uncertain terms, that Jesus is special and far greater in magnitudes, than anyone in human history in ways that were still unclear to the people of his day, even his closest friends.

We, you and I, are at the other end of the story of Jesus. We know the outcome. We confess that he is Lord of the universe. Then, the question that begs to be answered is this, “Is he Lord of our lives?” Peter tried to make a dwelling for him on the mountaintop. But Jesus longs to dwell in our hearts. Is there room in your heart for the Lord of your life?

After Jesus gave himself as an example of the godly life as the servant messiah, Jesus then gave his own life on a cross so that the sins of God’s rebellious creation might be forgiven, and our death sentence pardoned. But his activity in human lives did not stop there. Before he left the earth for the last time he said that he was going to send someone or something to take his place.

This is how I think about what was to take place. While Jesus was in his human nature, he was limited to a singular presence as any other human being was. Now, having given himself as an example of the godly life and having given his own human life so that our sins could be forgiven and our death sentences pardoned, now, that Good News had to be sent out throughout the world. In order for that to happen Jesus had to be multiplied. So God gave us a gift, something new to us even though it has always existed with God, and that is a new and different form of God revealed in Jesus Christ - the Holy Spirit. Don’t get tangled up in my explanation, it’s not as if the being Jesus no longer exists. We confess that he does exist. The point is that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, can now be everywhere, with everyone at the same time to continue his discipling in all who believe in him.

Moving on briefly to the New Testament Reading from Second Corinthians, Paul indicated that the glory that made Moses' face shine faded over time. As important a figure as Elijah was, his radiance didn't hold a candle to Jesus'. In fact, though he is a significant Old Testament character, we always get him confused with his successor, Elisha. Elijah Elisha, we get them mixed up, or maybe we don't even know there is a difference, but occasionally when someone comes up to do the readings they get confused and so their names get pronounced like a hybrid of both and it comes out "Elischa." We don't know which one is which? Who did what? What difference does it make? "None!" wrote Paul! All the glory of the OT fades to give way to God's best and last attempt to break into humanity's heart.

Jesus is the one and only one who brings us hope! And we should know that is true because we can feel him dwelling in our hearts as that radiance of the Holy Spirit. It is that burning inside us that fires up hope in us. Hope that most of us take for granted because, quite frankly, we have it pretty good – but others don't. We need to share that hope with the hopeless.

The hopeless, wrote Paul, are blinded by the god of the age. Things haven't changed a bit. Right now in the Mahoning Valley people are losing their jobs and the god of the age, financial insecurity, has blinded many people. Many are without hope.

But Paul wrote that we have been given the ministry of hope and it should be written all over our faces. And our faces should be unveiled so that the glory of the Lord that dwells in us radiates out and *enradiants* others. Paul even wrote that as we do that, we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus with ever-increasing glory.

Raisin' the Bar Challenge

When we began our lives as Christians at baptism, likely a little candle was given to our sponsors or parents, and the presider at our baptisms said words like these:

"Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

And so finally my Raisin' the Bar Challenge for us this day is to ask ourselves these questions; "Does my light shine? Do I *enradiant* others? Do I reflect the glory of the Lord? Do I bring glory to my Father in heaven?"

It is our ministry. It is our only Christian pursuit.

"Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Let your light shine out into the darkness. Enradiant your world. For you, church, are the hope of the world.

Prayer

Holy God, we have but one petition, and that is to be so enradiated by your Holy Spirit that the loving glow of your Son Jesus can be seen in the living of our lives. We pray this in his holy name. Amen