

TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

Cross of Glory Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Hidden God Revealed

Luke 9:28-36

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) ³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Before I begin my sermon today, I have to let you know that today's message is not for everyone. If you came here today and you already have everything about God figured out in your mind, then this message is not for you. If you can honestly say that you know just who God is and why God does everything that he does in your life and in the lives of the people around you, then you might as well take a nap for the next fifteen minutes. But if you came here today with questions on your mind as to who God really is and why it is that God acts the way he does and why it is that God doesn't act the way you want him to at times, then come and take a walk with me. Let's take a walk together up the Mount of Transfiguration. On this mountain, we can learn a great deal about God. On this mountain we can find the "hidden God" revealed.

Before we go up the mountain with Peter, James and John, we need to spend some time with them on the plain. Our text this morning, begins, "*About eight days after Jesus said this...*" What is it that Jesus had said that was so important? The account of the transfiguration comes right on the heels of a very important discussion that Jesus had with his disciples. Peter had just made a wonderful confession of his faith that Jesus truly was the Christ, the Son of the living God and then Jesus dropped this bombshell on his disciples: "*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the*

elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

We can only imagine the shock and dismay those followers of Jesus must have felt. They were soaring high, confident that they had found the Messiah—confident that they had found the man to restore the earthly kingdom of Israel to glory. And now he tells them that he had come to this earth to suffer and die. How could this be? Was this truly the Christ? Where was he leading them? What was about to happen?

For nearly eight days, these doubts and uncertainties swirled in the minds of the disciples as Jesus unfolded to them the true meaning of his mission on this earth. At was in the midst of this uncertainty and disillusionment that we find the disciples at the base of the mountain. In spite of any mixed feelings they might have had, when Jesus asked Peter, James and John to start the hike up the mountain with him, they went along. And it was on this mountain that Jesus, whose true identity must have seemed somewhat hidden to those disciples, would make himself known in a spectacular way.

Do you ever feel as though you are following a hidden God—a God whose ways don't always seem to make sense to you? You would not be the first person to ever feel this way. The great prophet Isaiah once marveled: *“Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.”* More often than not, this feeling comes in the midst of suffering or experiencing problems. It's hard to know how God could allow someone close to be taken away before you felt you were ready for it. What kind of God allows all of those people to perish within a few hours in a great earthquake? What kind of God allows an athlete to die while practicing for the Olympics?

Even closer to home—what kind of a God allows the preaching and teaching done within this congregation to be rewarded by no great increase in the size of membership? What kind of a God allows the bills of a congregation to grow faster than the contributions which it receives? And then there are the very personal questions in your life that I don't know but you can fill in on your own, because you've been thinking about them. You've been wondering about this hidden God whose ways don't seem to make sense to you.

It would be great if it all made sense, wouldn't it. It would be great if God came here this morning, sat in the front pew, and answered all of our questions in a satisfactory manner. It would be great if God would show himself a little more out there in the world so that we could know we are really on the right track. We would love it if God pulled off a really big miracle or two for us to drive away all the questions and the doubts in our minds. But he doesn't...and he won't. That's not who he is. And that makes us upset. We get frustrated at God and his ways. And what is the root of this

frustration? It's our own sinful desire to have God reveal himself in the way we want him to rather than being content with the way that he does. It's really just selfishness on our part. And once we realize that and see if for the sin that it really is, then we are ready to go back to the mountain and appreciate just how God does reveal himself.

Listen again to what the disciples experience on the Mount of Transfiguration: *"As [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah,³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him."* What an amazing sight the Lord allowed these disciples to witness! There in glory before them was their Savior speaking with men they had only heard about in Scripture: Moses and Elijah. It is interesting to note what role those two men played in the recording of God's salvation history. Moses wrote the five books of the law and Elijah was representative of the great prophets. It was these two men who now spoke with Jesus about his upcoming suffering and death which would bring to fulfillment all of their writings. And Peter, James and John were allowed to view some of this miraculous discourse.

But it wouldn't last very long for them. Basking in the glory of that mountain was not the Lord's purpose for bringing those men with him. That can be as we read the rest of the account: *³³As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."* This is the main point the disciples were to take away from this experience. Listen to Jesus. No matter how difficult his teachings. No matter how his words seem to clash with their own expectations. Listen to him. He is the true Son from Heaven. The Lord wanted the disciples to be content with the revelation they received—first from Moses and the prophets and now from the Lord Jesus himself.

We also need to be content with the revelation God has given to us. The revelation we have received from God is his Word. We, too, are able to hear Moses and the prophets speak. We too can see Jesus in his glory and hear him speaking about his suffering, death and resurrection. At times, we are tempted to think that that is not enough. But we need to appreciate what miracles are contained within the pages of Scriptures.

Without God's Word, you would not know what real forgiveness is. The best you could hope for is to somehow please an unknown God with your good works. With God's

Word, you can be certain that God is pleased with you—not because of your good works but because of the work of his Son, Jesus. The Word reveals to us Jesus' mission of love—his innocent suffering, his sacrificial death, his glorious resurrection. The Word reveals to us just what this means in our lives—we have forgiveness, we have peace, we have the hope of heaven.

These are the answers that satisfy our deepest needs. And that has to be enough. Because as long as we are on this side of heaven, we will never know the answers to all of our questions about God and his ways. Nor should we expect to. God doesn't ask us to have everything figured out. What he does ask is that we see his Son, revealed in his Word, and listen to him. Be content with what we find on the pages of Scripture. Here we have the hidden God revealed to us, just as he wants to be.

There will come a day when we know fully even as we are fully known. That day will come when we arrive in heaven. But that day is not here yet. And so until then, we cling to what we do know. We cling to what we have seen about God and his love. We rejoice in the miracles that we can witness—the miracles of faith and hope and peace. And we thank God for revealing himself to us as our Savior. We could not ask for anything more. **Amen.**

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Pastor Steven Hahm
pastorhahm@hotmail.com
225.752.5503