

“Our Inner Light Revealed”

February 27, 2022

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

Certain topics during the church year can be hard to talk about, mostly because it seems like there's really nothing new to say. Transfiguration is like that for me. It just seems fairly cut and dried. I mean, what more can I say about this scene on the mountain so many of us have read and heard about before? The story of Jesus' amazing transformation and the disciples' encounter with the voice of God occurs at a pivotal place in all the gospels. It follows Jesus' first announcement of his impending death in Jerusalem and marks the point when Jesus sets his sights on that city and begins the long journey to the cross.

But stories like this, that seem to tell us something about Jesus' identity, maybe understood as proof of his status, carry layers of meaning beyond the literal. On the mountain a kind of veil is lifted from Jesus and he is revealed as the Christ, the holy Beloved of God. But that revelation is meant to teach us more than who Jesus really is. It's meant to reveal who we really are. In his light our inner light is revealed.

This is something Paul seems to understand intuitively, even though there's no evidence that he had ever heard this story or knew anything about it. Throughout Paul's ministry a central principle he teaches over and over, as Father Richard Rohr points out in his book *The Universal Christ*, is “Christ must first be recognized within.” Rohr observes something Paul says in Galatians that is often mistranslated. In Galatians 1:16 he writes “*apokalupson ton huion ou tou en emoi*” God revealed his son *in* me. Now, if you look that up in the Bibles in our pews you'll find it says, God revealed his son *to* me. It's an important difference and one Paul would have understood. He doesn't discover Christ somewhere out there, but within himself, and throughout his ministry he will encourage others to do the same.

That's what Paul means when he tells the people of Corinth, “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” Our inner light is revealed in Christ. So what happens on the mountain isn't just to convince skeptics, or even to establish Jesus' place among the prophets. What happens there reveals to his disciples and to all of us who we truly are. Christ lives in us, if we have the eyes to see.

Rohr talks about Paul's insight as a paradigm shift. He sees himself in an entirely new way and he sees the world around him in a new way. Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain must have had a similar effect on the disciples. They see in him their true selves, as though reflected in a mirror, and learn that following him has higher stakes than they realized. This is what Paul wants the people of Corinth to understand. They've entered a whole new world by aligning themselves with Christ. The people they once were have died and they've risen to be a new community, the body of Christ.

And it's to that body, the community of Christ, where all this is meant to take us. The story in the gospel continues the next day. Right after they have this remarkable experience on the mountain, Peter, James and John and the other disciples are confronted with a challenge, a need, they can't handle. They still haven't fully grasped the significance of their new identity. The light within them isn't meant for them alone. The light Christ reveals within us is meant for the world. We're meant to bring compassion, justice and healing to those around us in need. Our light is meant to bring light to others.

Again, looking to Rohr's book, we find the light in Christ leads us, he says, to great love and great suffering. Embodied in Christ, the love and suffering of the world is revealed in his light. And when our inner light is revealed through him that love and suffering is embodied in us. When we come down the mountain, the light of Christ that lives in us is meant to bring healing to a world in pain. So, we never stand alone. We stand with those in our world who long for healing, who long for love, who long for justice and peace.

Understanding that, I think, should change how we respond to homelessness or bigotry or war. We can't stand back and hide this light we've found. We're called to bring it to every circumstance where there's fear or despair. The transfiguration of Jesus is a call to embrace the light of Christ in ourselves and to live the life of Christ in the world.

Amen