
² Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.

And He was transfigured before them...

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is My Son, the Beloved; listen to Him!' ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, He ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

From Mark 9:2-9 (NRSV)

Before you are images of 3 famous people... Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, ('Mother Teresa'). Albert Schweitzer. Florence Nightingale. Each are known for their philanthropic work: Mother Teresa in India, Schweitzer (a Lutheran theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician, Nobel Prize winner, who died 1965), a medical missionary in Africa, and Nightingale known for her passion for nursing.

One thing to note about these images – they are young... They were young when they started their acts of kindness. The question is, how well do we fare these days in inspiring people to be truly 'kind'? History books are filled with egoistic and narcissistic peoples because they tend to accomplish more things in their lives. But what about those who seek to bring real change into this world? Indeed, why be kind?

One person has noted that

1. Kind people put themselves out there, and this gives strength. The emotional fortitude it takes to reveal your innermost self to another human is a special kind of strength... reserved for those with the strongest of spirits.
2. Kind people have the power to help others. Kind hearted people have more willingness to help others. This gives them an added layer of power and strength over those who act selfishly. Kind people are the ones who can really make a difference in the world.
3. Kind people have built up their resilience. When you lift weights you physically break down the muscle. The amazing thing, is that as the muscle repairs itself it grows back bigger and stronger than before... The same happens to your heart... not literally, but metaphorically. The more challenges you face, the more resilient you become.
4. Kind people have control over their own emotions. Kind hearted people have the tolerance and patience necessary to remain cool, calm, and collected under difficult circumstances. Anyone who has ever needed to keep their emotions under control knows it takes inner strength and kindness to get through it.

5. Kind people develop themselves further. If we aim to have self-awareness what we love or don't love about another person our eyes will be opened.
6. Kind people are interested in new perspectives on the world. Kind people seek out new perspectives and use them to develop into a well-rounded person.
7. Kind people find more happiness in the long run. Emotional connections with others make us more fulfilled and help us lead more complete lives.

How do we seek to 'change the world'?

In our Scripture this day we hear about Jesus trans-figuring, or "changing", at least in appearance, before His disciples. It was a change which was full of meaning. And as the 3 disciples saw it, they didn't comprehend it until much later on, looking back.

The Transfiguration takes place 6 days after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. It signals a change in Jesus' ministry, more so from a preaching and teaching ministry (although He continued to do so), but with a clearer focus on His journey to Jerusalem, which would climax at the cross.

At the time of the Transfiguration Jesus was already about two-thirds of the way through His public ministry. He had already called His disciples. He had spent a lot of time preaching, teaching and healing people in the regions of Judea and Galilee. But now Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds in order to spend more time instructing His disciples. He wanted to prepare them for their future work as His messengers, and to prepare them for His upcoming suffering and death. This was brought out in the verses right before our sermon text, "He (Jesus) then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Unfortunately, the disciples like so many of the people had their own false notions about the work Jesus came to do. When Jesus told the disciples that He would suffer and die and rise three days later, Peter objected and said, "This will never happen." Obviously more instruction was needed. And so six days after Peter verbally objected to Jesus' suffering and death, Jesus took Peter, and also James and John, and went up a high mountain by themselves.

In Luke's account of the Transfiguration we are told Jesus took them up there to pray, and that eventually the disciples fell asleep. While Jesus was praying He was transfigured, His appearance changed. What exactly was this like? The evangelists almost seem to struggle to find words to describe it. Matthew describes Jesus' face shining like the sun and his clothes becoming as white as the light. Luke mentions that the appearance of Jesus' face changed and His clothes became blindingly bright like a flash of lightning. And in our text, Mark describes His clothes becoming extremely white, whiter than anyone could bleach them. What Peter, James and John were experiencing was the form of

God shining through the form of the servant. Jesus' divine glory which was normally hidden while in the flesh was partially revealed to the disciples

The Transfiguration of Jesus is hard to understand for many people. We understand Jesus doing things like being born, and preaching and dying. Even miraculous things like healing people, doing miracles, and rising from the dead – while requiring our faith are still easier to understand. What is the significance of this mountain-top experience with Jesus? And then, what does it mean for me, and my faith?

The Transfiguration demonstrates in a powerful way that this is God's Son, and that we are to listen to Him. The voice gives the command: "Listen to Him," "Listen" (Greek: *akouete*) is a present imperative, implying continuing action: "Keep on listening to Him" or "Continue to listen to Him." God gave Ten Commands in the OT. In the NT, we have this one command. And why are we to do this...?

Hebrews 12 tells us to "Fix our eyes on Jesus", and for the sinner in need of salvation, there really is nowhere else to look. But looking to Him, we can be sure that He is who He says He is, that He did what He said he would, and He will do what He promises. If we trust in ourselves and our works, if we look within, we will not have this assurance. But in Jesus only do we rest secure, and know the peace that only Jesus can bring.

Because transfiguration is the centre where Jesus is all there is. At the point where Jesus is all there is, we too can be transformed. In his second letter to Corinth, Paul writes, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." (2 Corinthians 3:18, *ESV*).

We are being transformed from one degree of glory to another!

As we think about what this truly means, one writer has made the following comparisons...

On the mountain, we encounter almighty God;

in the valley, there is an encounter with the demonic.

On the mountain we encounter our faith's heritage;

in the valley, we encounter those who consider questions of faith as occasions for battle.

On the mountain, God's calming voice is heard;

in the valley, human argument is heard.

On the mountain, disciples are in a mood for worship;

in the valley, the disciples are spoiling for a fight.

On the mountain, the glory of God is revealed;

in the valley, the power of sin and unbelief is revealed.

“O Lord, carry me away to the mountain,” might be our prayer. But the question is, where do we actually live as God’s people, and where are we called to serve?

It wasn't a world removed from this world that Jesus had called His disciples to follow Him to. It was a world in this world, this world of sickness and disease, of paralysis and demons, of arguments and accusations, of poverty and death. And it is into this world our Lord Jesus Christ, indeed, God Himself, has come – to bring about an incredible ‘transfiguration’ for us all...

The world needs people to seek to bring a transfiguration to it, and we can celebrate the many people who have in various ways sought to bring some ‘good’ into this world. But the One who has brought about a real and everlasting change is God in Christ Jesus.

A pastor once gave a children’s sermon on how to get to heaven. He asked the children, “If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?” “NO!” the children all answered. “If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?” Again, the answer was, “NO!” Well, then, if I was kind to animals, and loved my wife, would that get me into Heaven?” Again, they all answered, “NO!” “Well,” the pastor continued, “then how can I get into Heaven?” A young boy shouted out, “YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!!!”

Life itself is changed through Jesus. And that same Life-transforming God is here today with us, just as He was that day on the mountain. And just as He did there, Jesus is bringing about transfiguration for us as well. Only instead of changing His body into something else, He changes something else, namely bread, into His body. And in giving that body to you to eat, Jesus is giving to you everything He has. Especially what He gained for you with that body at the cross. He does the same with His blood in wine. All for you.

What a wonderful transforming gift of Life we receive through our loving God and Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.