

Transfiguration 2021, The Transfiguration: A glimpse of what we will become

1. Metamorphosis...change it's something that is natural and happens all the time
 - a. As a process it's neither good nor bad but sometimes it does produce something much more splendid than it began with.
 - i. Take, for example, the butterfly I suspect that most of you appreciate the beauty of a butterfly more than the beauty of the caterpillar that precedes it.
 - ii. But we can't say that the butterfly is "good" while the caterpillar is "bad" that categorization doesn't fit
 - iii. The butterfly's metamorphosis doesn't redeem the caterpillar it's just the next stage of its development
 - iv. And while we don't assign "good" or "bad" to a change like that we do usually think of it as progress from immature to mature, incompleteness to completion, etc
 - b. Our Gospel reading today from Mark talks about a change, a metamorphosis, in Jesus that revealed who He was by nature
 - i. The transfiguration (underlying Greek word is metamorphosis) of Jesus revealed the reverse what we think of as transformation.
 - ii. If the transformation of caterpillar to butterfly represents a completion or maturation of development the process of Jesus becoming human is something like its opposite
 - iii. Jesus is by nature God, the eternal Word, through Whom everything was created and by Whom all is sustained, He is incomprehensible, undefinable, all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere.
 - iv. Who for the sake of sinful humankind became everything He is not for our sake, circumscribed to one location in a human body, subject to hunger, thirst, tiredness – like a butterfly becoming a caterpillar on much larger scale.
2. But all of this He did for us and for our salvation, and in His transfiguration we see what He is by nature and what we will become because of His work of salvation.
 - a. I often wonder what we lost when we fell into sin, were we to look like Moses and Elijah on the mountain with Jesus?
 - i. In Genesis 1 God created man and woman in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27), but we don't know fully what that image and likeness was.
 - ii. Was it a quality like God's perfect righteousness that we received or was there also something physical in that likeness that would have been visible?
 - b. In our OT lesson today, we see what we might have looked like in the face of Moses as he spent time with God in the tent of meeting

- i. No one in Scripture, other than Jesus, had the relationship with God like we see in Moses
 - ii. Throughout the Exodus God would meet with Moses in a tent, called the Tent of Meeting, that was set up outside of the camp as Exodus 33 reports, **When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses... Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.** (Exo 33:9,11)
 - c. And from all that time spent in the Lord's presence Moses' face changed.
 - i. It shone with the reflected glory of God as we are told in our OT lesson today when he came down the mountain from receiving the 10 Commandments the second time (Ex 34:30, 35).
 - ii. I can't help but wonder if that is what we would have looked like had we not fallen into sin, reflecting the radiance and holiness of God
 - d. But notice the reaction of the people whenever Moses would come from meeting the Lord, **"Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him."** (Ex 34:30)
 - i. The fear was more than just a fear of the supernatural, it was the fear of being in the presence of holiness.
 - ii. We see it throughout the Bible when sinful people are in the presence of the heavenly.
 - iii. As Luke reports when the angels appeared to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem, **"And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."** (Luk 2:9-10)
 - iv. Or Isaiah's reaction when he sees God in a vision seated on His throne, **"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"** (Isa 6:5), Isaiah recognizes his sin in contrast with God's holiness.
3. So, when our Lord goes up the mountain with Peter, James, and John in today's Gospel they get a glimpse not only of who Jesus is by nature but of Moses and Elijah, too.
- a. We don't know why Jesus went up on the mountain with these three only, we don't even know on which mountain these events took place.
 - i. Our reading begins with, **"And after six days..."**, the event to which these 6 days refer is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
 - ii. Perhaps the Transfiguration was meant to confirm for them what Peter had confessed.

- iii. Our Lord does say in between Peter's confession and this event, **"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."** (Mk 9:1)
- b. But when they arrive on the top of the mountain Mark reports, **"he was transfigured (metamorphed) before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them."** (Mk 9:2)
 - i. And as is typical when the heavenly meets the earthly there is fear as Peter blurts out, **"Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (Mark reports) he did not know what to say, for they were terrified."** (Mk 9:5-6)
 - ii. And we see Moses and Elijah with Jesus, who were also, as Luke's Gospel reports, in glory – perhaps they too were radiant.
- 4. And that is what we have to look forward to...this is our destiny as children of God
 - a. A return to the glory with which we were created when we reflected the glory and holiness of the One who created us
 - i. This is what our Lord came to restore, not just a mundane eternal existence like our present life, but resplendent and dazzling like our Lord and Moses and Elijah
 - ii. Paul tells us in Philippians, **"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."** (Php 3:20-21)
 - iii. Or as John says in his first epistle, **"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."** (1Jn 3:2)
 - iv. Several of the early fathers of the church said, "He became what we are so that we might become what He is."
 - b. That is the hope that we are given through the Transfiguration a glimpse of what we will become - our restored, glorious future that we receive through faith in Christ!