

Exodus 24: 12-18  
Psalm 2 or 99  
II Peter 1: 16-21  
St. Matthew 17: 1-9

Feast of the Transfiguration 2023.

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“This is my Son, the Beloved.”

St. Matthew 17: 5b

A teacher who taught kids when they first came to school told me a sweet story a few years ago: She wore glasses, but one day in October, she happened to put her glasses down on her desk, and went to see a little girl who was having trouble with her assignment. The little girl became wide-eyed and anxious: “Where’s my teacher?” she asked her teacher. The teacher went back to her desk, put *on* her glasses, and came back to the little girl. She could see the relief on the little girl’s face: “Oh, there you are!...”

Now, of course the teacher had been there all along – but there was a lack of *perception* by the little girl. She didn’t recognize her teacher’s true identity...

Today is the last Sunday in the season called “Epiphany.” Beginning this coming Wednesday, we will start our journey in the season of Lent, moving toward the glorious festival of Easter. A few years ago, a Sunday School curriculum encouraged its students to observe the Transfiguration of Jesus on this Sunday, and the idea gradually caught on, until the Transfiguration readings are now recommended in the Canadian Anglican lectionary...

So, what is the “Transfiguration?...” Four times in the New Testament, the writers record an experience which some of Jesus’ closest friends had: They went up a mountain together, off the beaten track. (In the ancient world, it was easier to build a path *around* a mountain, rather than *over* it.) People of faith would often have strong experiences of God while on a mountain – for example, think of Moses getting the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, or the great prophet Elijah contending for God on Mount Carmel...

As they go up the mountaintop, the clothes Lord Jesus was wearing become dazzlingly white. The disciples hear the voice of God thunder his pleasure, and they see Moses and Elijah speaking with their Master. The ancient Jewish people would have understood the connection right away: Moses provided God’s Law to the people. Elijah was considered the greatest of the Prophets of God. The representations of the Law and the Prophets appeared with the Lord Jesus on the mountaintop – the Christ who is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets... These close friends of Jesus are astonished, terrified, and humbled by this experience. It is called the “Transfiguration” of Jesus Christ...

It wasn’t the case that Jesus became something he wasn’t already. Rather, when the apostles were open to God, they perceived Jesus for who he really is: The Son of God himself, the fulfilment of all the longings of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, fully divine as well as fully human...

We too are called to recognize the full reality of Jesus Christ. He is not simply a wise teacher or a wonderful companion (although Jesus Christ is certainly wonderful and wise). He is the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, before whom we properly are astonished, and humbled... Like the first disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to recognize him for who he really is, to be humble, and to obey...

Jesus Christ is now in heaven, of course, and continues to pray for all God's fallen creatures, including you and me. His presence now is by his Holy Spirit. You and I are invited to undergo the same process of discernment today, as the first disciples did on the mountaintop: Where do we recognize God at work in our world? How do we respond, and learn to partner with him?...

Let's think of two "R"s. We are called to Recognize. And we are called to Respond. Recognize. Respond.

All the honour, all the glory, and all the praise goes to Almighty God, who cherishes us his creatures so much, his Son Jesus Christ came to set us free. He reveals his glory to all generations. May we always Recognize. And Respond in humble service.

Thanks be to God.