

Transfiguration and Transformation

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C (RCL). Luke 9:28-36 (The Transfiguration). February 7, 2016. The Episcopal Shared Ministry of Our Saviour, Salem and Trinity, Alliance in the Diocese of Ohio. The Rev'd Jerome H. (Kip) Colegrove.

On the first Sunday after the Epiphany, not many weeks ago, I preached on the baptism of our Lord. Now, on the last Sunday after the Epiphany, the gospel reading is the transfiguration of our Lord. There are some interesting parallels between these two events.

In particular, when the voice is heard from heaven at Jesus' baptism it says, "You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." At Jesus' transfiguration the voice from the cloud says, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" Both events express aspects of a vocation, a call, to serve God among his creatures in this wonderful and troubled world. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, his baptism affirms and empowers his call; Jesus' transfiguration affirms how his faithfulness in carrying out that ministry is revealing more and more who he is—the Son of God.

When I talked about the meaning of Jesus' baptism for us, I said that for him, as for us, the event was a commissioning, an empowering to take our place in the communion of saints as ministers of the gospel—not as preachers like me, necessarily, but as people with a call, a mission, a purpose under heaven for the redemption of the world. One way or another, that's part of every Christian's life after baptism. And the grace that we accept through faith will transform

us as we endeavor prayerfully and in accord with scripture to live into our call in Christ.

The transfiguration of Jesus emphasizes his faithfulness in living as God's beloved Son in the world, just as our transformation emphasizes our faithfulness in living as Christians in the world. We become more and more like the persons we were created to be; the distortions of sin and death—all the effects of evil—are overcome as we live faithfully into the love of Jesus Christ. Will we make mistakes? Undoubtedly. Will we encounter resistance? You bet. But we are called to hold fast to a victory already won on the Cross. We will have our moments on the mountain of glory and amazement and our moments in the valley of sorrow and suffering. Our work is good work in all circumstances if, as the poet George Herbert said, it be sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

The glory, the truth, the justice, the love we serve is manifest as much through our daily perseverance as through our moments on the mountaintop. So it was with Jesus, so it is with his friends. And he has called his disciples friends, provided they accept the transforming challenge he offers them. (John 15:14-15) You and I are his disciples, his friends, in this place and time. It is our privilege—and our challenge—to get good at it.

❖ *This sermon is the result of a few modifications to the sermon preached on the Last Sunday after Epiphany when it fell on February 10, 2013. Lent came early that year, too.*