

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

The word is not found in the Gospel text from Luke today, unlike Matthew and Mark. Luke doesn't tell us that Jesus was "transfigured" or metamorphosed (μετεμορφώθη) before the disciples Peter, James, and John. He simply tells us that "*the appearance of [Jesus'] face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.*" That is, Luke does describe the event.

As we have gone through the season of Epiphany, we have been treated to some glimpses of the divinity of the One born king of the Jews—God in man made manifest. Today is the climax of this season and its close. We will shortly enter the season of Lent. And so today we see in a marvelous way the "*glory ... of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14) shining forth from behind the veil of His flesh. In some ways, as Elijah of old was fed by God with cake and water before his arduous 40 day journey to Mount Horeb where the Lord would manifest Himself in a low whisper, so this is our last glimpse of the glory of the Son of God before our own arduous 40 day journey to cross and death where our tongues will sing of the glorious battle and the ending of the fray in Christ, who as a victim won the day (LSB434).

And that's what this Transfiguration of our Lord is about. It's about building us up for the journey. It's about reminding us that for us Christians after suffering comes glory, "*that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*" (Rom. 8:18), "*that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified*" (Rom. 8:28-30).

It's what we prayed for in the Collect: that we would be made "co-heirs with the King of His glory and [brought] to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven." It's also what we just sang:

"With shining face and bright array Christ deigns to manifest today
What glory shall be theirs above Who joy in God with perfect love.

"And faithful hearts are raised on high
By this great vision's mystery, For which
in joyful strains we raise The voice of prayer, the hymn of praise" (LSB413).

In fact, our Gospel gives us clues, that this is Christ's purpose. Our text begins: "*about eight days after these sayings*" Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain where He was transfigured. After what sayings? Looking backward in Luke 9, we see. Peter had just confessed that Jesus is "*The Christ of*

God” (Luke 9:20), and then Jesus begins to tell the disciples of His death and resurrection: “*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised*” (Luke 9:22). And Matthew tells us how this revelation was received. The disciples were troubled. “*Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you*” (Matt. 16:22), Peter said to Jesus.

Jesus wasn’t done. Crosses lay ahead for Jesus’ disciples, too — then and now. “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ... For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels*” (Luke 9:23, 24, 26). And although Scripture doesn’t say it, I can imagine that this proclamation only added to the disciples’ consternation. They needed to be lifted out of their dismay, and so Jesus’ display of glory was the motivation the disciples needed to get through the days to come.

But there’s more from our text that hints that this transfiguration of Jesus reminds us that Christ’s suffering—and the Christian’s, too—ends in glory. You recall that Jesus met with two Old Testament saints on the holy mountain: not just Elijah, but Moses, too—Elijah representing the prophets, and Moses, the Law-giver, but Moses also, the great deliverer of God’s people Israel from bondage in Egypt. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were holding “converse high” we just sang. But only Luke tells us what they talked about: Jesus’ “*departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*”

Now, you know the account of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. You may know that this account is contained in the Old Testament book of Exodus. At the end of Genesis, Jacob, that is, Israel, had moved down to Egypt with all his family because of the great famine. Jacob died there, and Joseph later, too. In Exodus, we hear how Israel grew to be a great nation in Egypt, and how they became enslaved and cried out to God for deliverance. Then, through Moses, the Lord brought them out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Deut. 5:15), shielding them from the plagues, especially the last one by the blood of a lamb, and leading them to safety through the Red Sea waters.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were talking about another exodus. Our text translates it “*departure,*” but it’s really another deliverance, one that Jesus would accomplish for all people in Jerusalem, as He would be led to the slaughter on the cross, a perfect lamb shedding His blood, that death may pass over us, that we might be led through water from death and burial to resurrection and life, indeed to the promised land.

This second deliverance is greater than the first, and our deliverer, Jesus, is greater than Moses. To be sure, Moses served well; but Jesus is the Son, and His glory is greater (Heb. 3).

To be sure, Moses talked with the Lord and came forth from His presence with a face that glowed (Ex. 34:29ff); but Jesus is the Lord Himself in the flesh, and His face shone with His own divine glory.

To be sure, Moses was a prophet who spoke God's word to the people; but Jesus is the Greater Prophet. The "*Majestic Glory*" (2 Pet. 1:17) bears witness: He is God's own Son, the Father's Chosen One, by whom God speaks to us (Heb. 1:1-2), and to whom we are to listen (Deut. 18:18).

To be sure, Moses delivered the Law to the people, which not even he could keep, and many are deluded into thinking that by the works of the law they can be saved—"*a veil lies over their hearts*" (2 Cor. 3:15); but Jesus Christ is He who delivers grace to us on top of grace, for He did what no other could do: He fulfilled "*the Law and the Prophets*" (Matt. 5:17), and He died the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:26). Thus, grace and truth come through Christ (John 1:16-17); by grace are we saved (Eph. 2:5).

To be sure, Moses led the people to the promised land, but Moses was not permitted to enter (Num. 20:10ff); but Jesus will come again for us, and will take us to Himself, "*that where [He is, we] may be also*" (John 14:3).

Moses was not permitted to set foot across the Jordan, but he nevertheless entered the ultimate Promised Land as he trusted in the greater promise. And we see him in communion with Jesus at His transfiguration. The promise to Moses is ours as well. In Christ, we will pass through suffering into glory. Our afflictions do not crush us. Though perplexed, we are not driven to despair. Though persecuted, we are not forsaken. Though struck down, we are not destroyed, for we carry in our bodies "*the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*" We look to Jesus and the glory of His cross for our aid now, and we look to the glory to be revealed for our hope "there in eternity," as St. Paul says, "*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Having witnessed today a bit of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6), and eating and drinking of the Sacrament that proclaims Christ's death until He comes again in glory, God grant us strength for a blessed Lent, our preparation for the glory of Christ's death and resurrection for us.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.