**The Holy Gospel according to Luke Chapter 9: 28-38 13th March 2022**

**28**Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter, John, and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. **29**And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. **30**Suddenly they saw two men, Moses, and Elijah, talking to him. **31**They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. **32**Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. **33**Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. **34**While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. **35**Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” **36**When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and, in those days, told no one any of the things they had seen.

This is the Gospel of Christ **– Praise to Christ the word.**

**Please be seated.**

Previously, we had heard that Jesus had chosen twelve disciples – one for each of the Jewish tribes. Do you know, I never knew until Gillian’s sermon last Sunday how it came to be twelve? Anyway, about a week after Jesus had told his disciples that he would suffer, be killed, and be again raised to life, he took Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. What happened next gives us the unfolding story which offered the disciples a glimpse of God’s glory. The transfiguration. Three of the gospel writers, Mark, Matthew, and Luke have related this story in the synoptic gospels.
What is interesting is that throughout scripture, God’s self-disclosure happens on mountains. God had given the sacred name and commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai and spoke to Elijah on Mount Horeb. Now, Jesus revealed his teaching about the kingdom on another mountain, where Peter, James and John receive confirmation of the identity of Jesus.
In this pivotal passage in the gospel, Jesus’ focus turns towards the awaiting confrontation in Jerusalem that will lead to the cross.

Slide one

While praying, the personal appearance of Jesus was changed into a glorified form, and his clothing became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus about his death that would soon take place. This appearance of Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the preeminent prophet convinced Luke that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the one to whom both the law and the prophets point. He is the fulfillment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament.
Right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life. When they saw Moses and Elijah, they knew that Moses had passed from this world 1,400 years before and Elijah had passed some nine hundred years before. Yet there they were, alive in glory before them. This time on the mountain had indeed shown the glory of Christ, witnessing a story of this glory to tell others.
Peter was expressing a wish to stay in that place, when a cloud enveloped them, and a voice said, “This is My Son, whom I have chosen, whom I love; listen to Him!” Not only was this impressive, but when the cloud lifted, Moses and Elijah had disappeared, and Jesus was alone with His disciples.
Undoubtedly, the purpose of the transfiguration of Christ into at least a part of his heavenly glory was so that the “inner circle” of His disciples could gain a greater understanding of who Jesus actually was.
Christ underwent a dramatic change in appearance in order that the disciples now had a greater realization of who Christ was. This was the reassurance they needed after hearing the shocking news of His coming death.

The disciples never forgot what happened that day, and these three bore witness to the transfiguration to the other disciples and to countless millions down through the centuries.
Slide two
JRR Tolkien could be accused of pirating this story in Gandalf’s return during Lord of The Rings, where he had changed from Gandalf the grey to Gandalf the white, following his trial with Balrog. Peter, James, and John were hugely awed by what they saw. The convention of calling this scene a transfiguration suggests that it is highly visual in character. Jesus was transfigured in front of his disciples, and his clothes became dazzling white. The appearance of Moses and Elijah make a big impact appearance, which must have been a stunning additional visual treat.
In an increasingly visual culture nowadays, some people long for their lives to be fuelled by sensory stimulation. Why learn to play cards when you can play on X-Box.
In today’s increasingly visual culture, it is easy to think that faith comes by seeing. Some churches now have the technological sophistication to produce rock-concert quality graphic music displays every Sunday as if it were half-time in the Superbowl.
The Transfiguration was a revealing, where Jesus became a beacon, like a lighthouse planted in the middle of the desert. Jesus stood in impressive company, sharing the moment with two others who know what it is to share close communion with God. The heavenly voice addresses all the witnesses: Peter, James, and John. The transfigured Jesus is not supposed to be figured out, he is supposed to be appreciated, and as a beacon, we should be drawn to him, as if we were moths. On this day, we should enjoy the warm wonder of his glow, because this bright light of the Transfiguration shines ahead into Lent to keep that season in perspective, never without hope and confidence. This light speaks a promise that God is here, and that God is life.
The process of discipleship is especially difficult in a culture of the now generation - shaped by instant results on social media. Our culture teaches us to expect quick, easy results. We live in a world where complicated responses can be squeezed down to a 140-character text.
Instead, as Peter, James, and John model for us, discipleship is being faithful and with Jesus for the long haul. In his presence we are formed and reformed to continue his ministry and mission.
Consider the dualistic categories that represent the modern aspects of Christian life: spirituality should include social action, retreat sometimes, but also engagement, pious devotion is fine, but needs a blend with our duties in real-life ministry. Consequently, Luke carefully holds together this mountaintop transfiguration experience with the challenges of daily service and ministry. A sense of Christian identity and vocation, includes the constant struggle for peace and justice in the world around us. The Transfiguration message here today calls for a life of faith yes, but with humility and especially patience to help us navigate the uncertainty of our times as true followers of the risen son of God.

Amen