

Transfiguration 2/19/23
Matthew 17:1-9 A

AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM, AND HIS FACE SHONE LIKE THE SUN, AND HIS CLOTHES BECAME WHITE AS LIGHT.

So, where do butterflies come from? Metamorphosis, right? A caterpillar eats a whole bunch, finds somewhere safe, where it can be totally still. Then, it grows new skin and turns into a butterfly. The entire process is called -- metamorphosis. No, this is not high school biology class; it's a sermon, a sermon on the Transfiguration of our Lord. So, why do I bring up metamorphosis? Because it helps us understand the transfiguration. We read in our lesson, "And He was *metamorphosized* before them." Yes, I know, in English it reads "transfigured," but in Greek, the word is "metamorphosis." "Metamorphosis" means "change form," like the caterpillar into a butterfly. And, like Jesus on the mount of transfiguration.

What Peter, James, and John were privileged to see was not a reflection, but **from within**. Jesus, being in His nature very God of very God, shone the eternal glory of God through His human bone and flesh.

It was not like when Moses went up the mountain – a 2nd time. You will recall he had to go back up a 2nd time because he broke the tablets the first time God gave him the Commandments. He was with God for 40 days and 40 nights on that mountain. When he came down, "[he] did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." Moses was simply reflecting the glory of God – think of a stained-glass window reflecting the sunlight. Jesus is different. He was not merely reflecting the glory of God. His glory was from **within**. His appearance

changed so much that Matthew calls it a metamorphosis; He literally changed His form.

What is Peter's reaction to this metamorphosis? "Lord, it is good that we are here. If You wish, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Peter, with James and John, saw that metamorphosis and wanted to do something about it. He wanted capture that moment and live in the glory of Jesus forever and ever, without end.

Why wouldn't you want to capture that moment and live in the glory of Jesus? Think about it -- in and of yourself, you are not all that glorious. You are born sinful and unclean. Inside you is death and you show it -- aches and pains fill your bones; doubts and fears fill your souls.

But, that doesn't stop you from seeking glory. Ever since the devil whispered to our first parents, "Did God really say," we have convinced ourselves that we can have glory here and now and we can have our way. No one want to be 2nd fiddle, sit on the bench, last in the class. We want, we are programmed, to be 1st chair; not just start on the team, but be captain of the team; graduate # 1; get that promotion at work. We want glory and we do what it takes to get it: we work hard, we dedicate ourselves. And when that is not enough, we lie, we cheat, we steal, we scheme, we back bite and back stab; we do whatever it takes to get ahead, including coveting and all manner of sins. And if someone gets hurt in the process, what is that to you? You were only looking out for # 1, right?

That is the earthly way of getting glory. But, its not God's way. Just because you today seek man-made glory does not mean that you will not bask in the glory of God for eternity.

That's what the Transfiguration -- the metamorphosis of Jesus -- is all about. When Jesus undergoes the metamorphosis on the mount, what He

is doing is giving you a foretaste of what He wants to do with you. What He wants to do with you is a metamorphosis. But for that to happen, Jesus has to undergo another metamorphosis.

It worked like this: Jesus comes down from the mount to go to the cross. He goes the downward way of glory to sin-bearing and suffering for you.

God lays on His only-begotten Son all the lying, all the cheating, all the stealing, all the scheming, all the back biting and back stabbing; all your vain attempts to gain glory for yourself. God takes all your sin and lays it all upon Jesus. For that sin, Jesus went up another mountain, carrying the cross of death. Upon Mount Golgotha, Jesus died for your sin, my sin, and the sin of every sinner.

There was no voice proclaiming, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," only voices crying out, "Crucify Him," "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God (Matt 27:40)." Then, there was only darkness and silence. Jesus was crucified and died for you, so that you would become the righteousness of God.

But the third day, He did raise that temple, He raised the temple of His body, bringing life and immortality to light.

That was the metamorphosis Jesus did for you. He did it so that you would be changed. It happens in your Baptism. God joins you to Christ and all He has done for you. You are a child stained by sin, but in the new birth of baptism, your sins are washed away. You go from being a child of the devil, to being a child of God; someone dead in sin to being alive in Christ Jesus; from being an heir of hell to an heir of heaven.

In your baptism, God began His good work in you. And through His Word and Sacrament of the Altar, He continues renewing you in Christ, so that He can do His work through you. That is why you pay your taxes on time; you seek to be forgiven and be reconciled with your neighbor; you love and cherish your spouse; you say nice things to your neighbor and about your neighbor; you rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. You are a reflection of Jesus to your neighbor.

And there's one more metamorphosis that you will undergo. In the 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about life in our earthly bodies, and he does it by comparing our earthly bodies to a tent. To understand Paul's words, all I have to do is ask you: who of you would like to be living in a tent this past week? Anybody? Paul says this,

“We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent {the tent of the body}, we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling ... For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened” (2 Co 5:1-4).

The day is coming when the tent of your body will be destroyed. You will die. On the day you die in Christ, your soul will be with Jesus forever and your body will return to the ground from which you came, for dust you are and to the dust you shall return. When Jesus comes again in all the glory that Peter, James, and John saw on the Transfiguration Mount, all who are in the grave will hear His voice and come forth, alive, body and soul together. And, He will transform your lowly body so that it will be like His glorious body (Ph 3:21). Paul tells us how He's going to do it: What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. “It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power;” raised from

the grave, we will have a marvelous, glorious body that does not decay, wear out, die; a body not affected by disease or sin or anything.

Remember how Peter wanted to build tents on the transfiguration mount to be in the glory of Jesus forever? You, Dear Child of God, in body and soul, **will bask** in the glory of God forever and ever, without end. That's what's going to happen to you. That's the metamorphosis that awaits you.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.