

Sermon HC Transfiguration Year C – The Rev. Jamie Samilio – 8/7/2016

What is transfiguration?

I went to the dictionary to start my work on this scripture.

Transfigure: transform, convert meaning to change one thing into another. Transform suggests changing from one form, appearance, structure, or type to another. Convert suggests so changing the characteristics as to change the use or purpose.

You might say that Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James, and John that they might have a true conversion experience, and understand the divine nature of Jesus. Up to this point, they had only seen Jesus in a human form. **A human who could perform miracles mind you -- but a human nonetheless.** Jesus changed and was shown to the disciples “in all his glory,” that is, in a divine form. The figures of **Moses and Elijah** who appeared and talked with Jesus about His death, a death that was rapidly approaching, is also significant because they represented the **Law and the Prophets**. God’s voice came from heaven and said, “**Listen to Him!**” This clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. Jesus is the new and living “**Way**” and He is replacing the old – **He is the fulfillment of the Law and prophecies from the Old Testament.**

The disciples saw a preview of Jesus’ coming glorification as King of kings and Lord of lords. And they never forgot what happened that day on the mountain. **Peter’s letter recounts hearing the voice say,** ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain.” Clearly Peter was converted through this experience.

The Gospel says, “**And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.**” I imagine that this was one of those “**I don’t believe my eyes moments.**” How would they describe the indescribable? Who would believe them? It would be like seeing **Dr. Bruce Banner turn into the incredible Hulk in front of you.** Who would you tell? Or perhaps you have seen a UFO – did you know that according to a Huffington Post survey, 48 percent of the population believes that UFOs do exist. **Stanton Freidman**, one of the scientists who investigate Roswell in 1947 said that we are pushed to think that it is only **kooks and old ladies that believe**, but infers that he knows better. We fear being ridiculed and not taken seriously. **We ask other people what they think, instead of trusting what we know in our heads and our hearts to be true.**

Are you Religious or spiritual? I dislike this question because it implies that religious people are not spiritual and if you are spiritual, you somehow should or could not be religious. What this question really means for me is that we are all seeking validation for the truth we can feel in our hearts. **We long to experience the divine in this world.** While we can experience the divine in an inspired worship service, through music, or the quiet stillness of nature, I think it also happens when engage each other in relationship – **we can recognize the divine in each other if we look closely enough.**

What these scriptures solidified for me is the idea that we have a need for transformation, change, conversion, makeover, alteration, and metamorphosis.

We need conversion as much as Jesus needed to be transfigured, but we struggle with change, with transformation. Not because of the change itself, but because we do not know what will become of us. There is uncertainty in transformation; there is mystery behind the change. We can either be afraid or avoid the change, or we can live into the wonder of what God has in store for us. Living into the wonder of the divine plan for our life requires trust. I think Peter's message is telling us that Peter realizes that if Jesus changes, then Peter will be changed as well. And we are also witness to the transfiguration, and we too will be changed – converted.

We will be converted from greed to giving, converted from hate to love, converted from self-serving to world serving.

Deciding to change is hard. Traversing from one place to another, from one way of being to another, is risky, and it is easier to stay the same – **or so we think.** Doing what you have always known is safe and sufficient, and you spend a lot of time and energy convincing yourself that staying where you are is best and makes you happy.

Sometimes, when get a glimpse of what could be; fear has us spend more time and energy avoiding the transformation than embracing the change and moving forward.

Right now my sisters and I are helping our mother transition from the home she has lived in for over 50 years into assisted living. It is difficult for me on the outside to imagine why Mom, living alone, needs 4 bedrooms, on almost three acres of property with laundry in the basement at 89 years old. But it is not my life, or my change that is being faced it is hers, and she is justifying staying put in every way imaginable. She is waiting for the right time, until she is finished sorting out all the photos, waiting until she sees all the options of places to move, until she has everything in order – she is afraid of what is to come. By contrast, Sylvia's mom just put the deposit on her new assisted

living apartment, went shopping for new furniture and is excited to be around new people and not live so isolated and alone – she is embracing the change and trusting the process and the support from her family. We can choose to live in the safety of the past, or we can live into the wonder of a future yet to unfold.

Once we have a glimpse of the glorious life that is possible, we let go of the need to hang onto that, which no longer serves us well. **For Christians this CONVERSION happens when we recognize Jesus as the savior, and put our trust in Him. I think that faith is living into the wonder that God has imagined for our lives.**

God wants good things for His children – we heard this message two weeks ago. As Jesus was transformed in front of the disciples, they were converted from people who hoped for a messiah, to people who recognized the messiah in front of them. What Peter, James, and John saw that day was unmistakable – confusing, but unmistakable.

So we know what transfiguration is. We know that we seek it in ourselves. What's next? What do we do? How do we witness to the transfiguration of Jesus now, in our time?

Do we just sit and wait for the right time and circumstances to come along when we feel transformed and converted? Transfiguration, and conversion happen in relationship with other people and when we engage the world. There is no right time, there is all the time – opportunities to witness to the transfiguration are around us, everywhere, and conversion experiences abound – we just need to recognize them and then act. **Conversion is not a one and done experience, it happens when my sense of wonder deepens, and I realize a little more of the truth about how God works in my life.**

Bible Scholar Christian Simpson said, **“Nothing limits our ability to reach our full potential more than the habit of not seeking the answers within ourselves.”** It is not the stuff we need to get done in the safety of our shelter that keeps us from conversion, it is not yielding to the voice calling us from within.

Transfiguration means a new way of seeing the world, and in that new sight our life direction is altered. **Remember, without change, nothing happens.**

Peter, Peter, Peter, I love Peter – he has no filters, he is impulsive and speaks his mind, often without thinking. When he sees Moses and Elijah, he instantly tried to

frame the vision to his **earthly understanding of how things worked**. He did not or could not recognize what was happening. He blurts out that having these “celebrities” with them was good and that they should build shelters for them – assuming they were making ready for Sukkot or the Feast of Booths, a Jewish harvest celebration where people stayed in the fields overnight in temporary booths or shelters.

Another take on Peter wanting to build three shelters comes from my friend Luis Leon who always said in his Transfiguration sermons, that humans suffer from an “Edifice Complex.” That is, when something great happens, we memorialize it by building a building to commemorate it. **What we should be doing however, is celebrating the transfiguration by building relationships, not structures.**

When we build shelters that protect us from harm, we also run the risk of keeping out that which is good, and rich, and transforming, and hopeful.

Let go of what you know about this world, **witness the glory of Jesus divinely revealed**, and **live into the wonder** of God’s vision for your life. **Amen**

References:

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Mary Schaaf Mullard: Christian Simpson quote

Jesus: The Greatest Life of All, By: Charles R. Swindoll

“We are all products of our environment, and most of us have been conditioned by that environment to look to others for answers. Our minds are programmed by getting answers to our most pressing challenges from the authority figures in our lives: - parents, peers, teachers, and bosses.

Consequently, we'll ask the opinion of just about anyone else to avoid thinking for ourselves. Some of us lose this societally-induced affliction as we mature, however the vast majority do not. Nothing limits our ability to reach our full potential more than the habit of not seeking the answers within ourselves.”

– Charles R. Swindoll via Mary Schaaf Mullard 2016