



Pastor Gwen's Sermon  
Transfiguration Sunday  
"Change, Company, Cloud and Command"  
Sunday, February 11, 2024

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

Years ago, I read a sermon by Pastor Eloy Gonzalez about our Gospel text for the morning. Some of you may have heard me talk about Pastor Gonzalez before, because I like his logical way of thinking about extraordinary events. The Transfiguration is certainly one of those amazing events in the New Testament, in fact, it might be the most powerful event recorded, in which Jesus does not say a word. Using 4 C's to convey the meaning of the Transfiguration, Pastor Gonzalez gives us an interesting way of looking at Mark's telling of this miraculous event. So, this morning, I would like to give you my take on the 4 C's on this mountaintop experience.

The 4 C's are the change, the company, the cloud, and the command. For weeks now, since Epiphany, we have been hearing how Jesus has spent his time bringing God's message of forgiveness and healing to the people. Along with his teaching and preaching, he spent much time healing the sick and the demonic. Even though Jesus showed the people many signs and wonders, they still failed to recognize his true identity. But now with his inner circle of disciples, Peter, James and John, God is about to give them undeniable proof of who He really is. And to do this Jesus takes them to the mountaintop. Remember that mountaintops are where it was thought that God comes to people. While there, these privileged three get to see and hear things that terrified them, yet imprinted on them an experience that could not be denied, an experience that proved that Jesus was truly the Messiah, God's Son.

The first "C" is for change. Jesus had his appearance changed right there on that mountaintop in front of Peter, James, and John. Jesus appeared to them in all His glory as the Son of God. His clothes were dazzling white, whiter than anything they had seen before. The brightness of Jesus appearance was because of Who He was inside. Jesus was God. This metamorphic appearance, the unveiling of Jesus' true identity, left no doubt in their minds that Jesus was the God Himself and the light that would shine in the darkness of the world.

The second “C” is for the company. When Jesus was changed into the radiant One, Elijah and Moses stood next to him. These two prominent Old Testament and faithful figures are usually seen as representatives of the law and the prophets. Interesting though that Elijah is mentioned first in this telling of Mark’s Gospel. He represents the Prophets and chronologically came second in history. Moses was the great lawgiver and undeniably the more important of the two men, he is mentioned second. Remember it was Moses that received the Ten Commandments directly from God and brought them down the mountain to the people. He then established a set of regulations that the Israelites were to live by. The laws of Moses were meant to lead the people to God. The other man speaking to Jesus was Elijah. Truly, he was a great prophet and possibly the greatest Old Testament prophet that lived by word and deed. God was present in Elijah’s life as well.

Also, interesting here was how these two men left the earth. Moses died on mount Nebo after God showed him the land, the Promised Land, that the Israelites were to enter. It was said that God Himself buried Moses. No one knows where that burial place was. The story is in Deuteronomy 34. And it was in 2 Kings that was just read that Elijah was simply taken by God to heaven in a whirlwind.

So here on the mountain we have Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets and Jesus between them. Jesus was the fulfillment of both the law and the promises of the prophets. Jesus was not just some reincarnation of Moses or Elijah. Rather the long-awaited Messiah that would fulfill them. All that was written about the Messiah in the law and by the prophets has now come true.

And now the 3<sup>rd</sup> “C” for the cloud. And I know that when we think of a cloud today, we think of the place where our information from our computers is stored. Well, not that cloud, but a cloud in the sky, that we have had too many of here in Park Falls lately. It sure would be nice to see the sun a bit more often. But none the less, it was a cloud that comes and overshadows them. Clouds were a symbol of God’s presence in both the New and Old Testament. God’s divine presence came in a cloud, on the holy mountain for the transfiguration of Jesus, just as a cloud came when Moses ascended Mount Sinai. And then it seems like we need a drum roll next, “This is my Son, the beloved; listen to Him!” God spoke these words from the cloud. As the Father, he reaffirms Jesus’ role as Messiah, as Savior, and as the Son of God.

And now the last “C” for the command. The first command in our Transfiguration story was that God commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus. But that is not the command I want to talk about this morning. Rather, Jesus tells Peter, James, and John to return to the foot of the mountain and He commands them to keep what they have seen to themselves. They cannot speak of this experience, this amazing thing that they have just experienced high on the mountain, until Jesus has had time to climb another hill, carrying a cross on his back.

Why do you suppose Jesus has such a strange request? Just think for a minute how those three men must have felt as they descended that mountain. They were coming down physically yes, but also emotionally as well. They had just experienced the presence of Elijah and Moses and heard the voice of God. And now they were leaving such a scene and coming back down to reality and ordinary people. I think I might still have been in awe and not been able to put into words, just yet what I had experienced. And I think that Jesus knew that if the disciples went and told the people what they had seen, the people might not have let Jesus finish the work of redemption. In fact, I believe that this is the first time that Jesus adds the disclaimer to his command not to tell. He adds that they, “should tell no one what things they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from

the dead.” Yes, Jesus was destined to die on the cross for our sins and nothing could get in His way. It was our loving Father’s plan to give His only son to die for us so that we could have forgiveness, abundant life on earth and the promise of life eternal in heaven someday.

Logically then, Jesus commands them to wait until after the Resurrection before they speak of what they saw. And at that time, it would be clearer to them what they had seen on that Transfiguration mount after they were witness to the cross and resurrection. Then there would be no more questions in their minds or in the minds of others, as to the fact that Jesus was God, the promised Messiah, the Israelite had been waiting for.

And so, if they cannot share what they saw, what is the purpose of this Transfiguration event? What do the change, the company, the cloud, and the command mean? Remember when Jesus asked the disciples, “ Who do the people say that I am?” And the disciples replied, “some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Their answer about Jesus’ identity revealed the confusion that the people had. Peter, James, and John yet had a lot to learn, but now they could learn it with vigor, a haste that they had not realized before. Jesus was on His way now to Jerusalem, to die on the cross.

And so, after the resurrection, there would be no question, no confusion. It would be known to all the world exactly who Jesus is. And these three men would have this transfiguration knowledge to share with others. They would share with the other disciples and all who would listen, who Jesus was. I would guess that their faith inched up more than a notch after seeing such an event. They could move forward telling everyone in their path, after the resurrection of course, that Jesus was the Messiah.

And how about us? Should we not do the same? We have the opportunity to hear the whole story of Jesus, as Old and New Testament have been recorded for us. These writings are the inspired word of God for all to read. And it is through the Word, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that they sink into our hearts so our faith can grow. Maybe we did not have the same personal experience as Peter, James, and John, but that knowledge has been passed on to us in written form.

The season of Epiphany is for understanding and recognizing Jesus, so it is appropriate that the season ends with The Transfiguration of Our Lord Sunday. Today’s text tells the world that Christ’s light shines with such brilliance that it cannot be denied. We now have more assurance that Jesus is superior to the law and the prophets. Jesus is God’s Son. I think that John says it best in chapter 1 of his Gospel writing, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” **AMEN**