

The Transfiguration of Our Lord: January 29, 2023
“Something More Sure”

“Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”¹ Amen.

It was a day just like any other. It had been six days since our Lord called me Satan. I made a great confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and Jesus was so pleased with me. He said to me, “Blessed are you Simon.” He then revealed that it was the Father in heaven who revealed this great truth to me and through my mouth the whole world knows that Jesus is not just a man, but the Christ. Jesus then firmly and clearly told the rest of the disciples, and myself, that His church is built upon this very confession—that He is the Christ.

But, when He spoke about our upcoming journey to Jerusalem and His impending betrayal, suffering, death and resurrection, I stubbornly resisted. I had put it out of my mind that this is precisely what the Christ was promised to do. So, my great words of confession were temporarily lost to a new set of words. I rebuked Jesus, ***“Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”²***

Truth be told, that didn’t go over too well with Jesus. He turned and lovingly put me right in my proper place, ***“Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”³*** I was. The word Satan means adversary, and to try and stand in the way of Jesus dying for your sins and for mine, was admittedly not a great idea.

¹ 2 Peter 1:1–2

² Matthew 16:22

³ Matthew 16:23

I still did not always have my mind set on the things of God, and Jesus knew this, of course. So, after six days, Jesus took James, John, and I with Him up a high mountain. We didn't think too much of it at the time, because it wasn't completely out of place for Jesus to be up the mountain. He would use it often as a way of communication. He would use it to pray to God and He would use it to preach and to teach us. You should have heard the Sermon on the Mount. Wow! What a punch that one packs!

Anyways, there we were walking with Jesus on the mountain and just like that (snap fingers), Jesus was transfigured before us. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light. He wasn't alone either. Moses and Elijah were also there and they were talking about His exodus; they were talking about the same thing that Jesus had just spoken to us six days earlier.

God had revealed to me once again just who Jesus was. This was God in the flesh. This is the beloved one of God in whom God is well-pleased. Jesus is the Divine Son of God and His glory is like no other. But He also a man. He walked with us. His feet and clothes got dirty the same as ours. He was hot and tired walking up that mountain, just like us. And then, His glory shone forth and all of that was forgotten. I offered too quickly work some more. I proposed to build three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah.

But, once again, I spoke too quickly. It wasn't my work to do. God was dwelling, that is John's word for tenting in the first chapter of His Gospel, in Jesus already. The same voice we heard at Jesus' baptism rang out and commanded us once again, "***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.***"⁴ What did I do? What could I do? I fell on my face in fear. I had gone from great confession to being an adversary of God back to a great confessor and now back again to what? Was I again an adversary? My mouth seems to get me in a lot of trouble. Little did I know it then, but that was not the last time my mouth would run too quickly. Just wait until the night Jesus is betrayed; but, I guess you probably already know what happened. Boy did that hurt.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, while I didn't know, do you know who did? Jesus. He knows my mouth runs, often without thought. He knows that I would continue to sin. He knows that I would be tempted to trust in my own works.

⁴ Matthew 17:5

But do you know what He said to me? As I was terrified, on the ground, with sins and fears and troubles of all kinds running through my mind and sins yet to commit, He walks over, puts His hand on me and says, “***Rise, and have no fear.***”

You know the rest of the story. He forgave me my faults. He continued to build and strengthen not only my faith, but He used my words and my life for the good of others. You can read many of these actions through the rest of the Gospels and Luke records many of them in his second book, the Acts of the Apostles. There is a lot of my actions in there and my first sermon is also recorded in there. Not everything I did and said is recorded of course, and Luke gives much of his latter pages to Paul, which some other time we can talk about him. He and I are more alike than I want to readily admit.

But today we focus on the Transfiguration. I know many Christians throughout the ages have spent countless hours pouring over their words and deeds. They have spent many anxious nights recalling the many times they have wrestled with their sinful flesh and succumbed to temptation. They have gone from moments of great confession and highest of highs, only to come crashing down when their word stands in the ways of God. They go through seemingly endless ordinary days just waiting for a sign. They want to know that what they are doing is pleasing to God. They want the peace that passes all understanding.

But the days drag on and when you look around all you see are other brothers and sisters in the human race. Some are believers, some are not. Some are Christian, others might be, others still are clearly not. Some align their works and words with other gods. Some only seem to worship themselves. Words and actions are used to crush and destroy, this comes from even those who call themselves Christian. We get angry. We get sad. We get anxious. We get all sorts of things and we cry—Come. Lord Jesus.! You’ve told us that if anyone would come after you, we have to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow. But I didn’t think there was going to be that much betrayal, suffering, and death!

There I did it again, didn’t I? I have my mind set on earthly things and not the things of God. Hear again these words I have already spoken to you in my second epistle:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.⁵

The prophetic word is more sure than the sight that James, John, and I saw on this mountain because the words of the prophets have been fulfilled in Jesus. He has been betrayed. He has suffered. He has been crucified. He has died and has been buried. AND He has risen from the dead. He has ascended into heaven and He sits at the right hand of God.

I already told you in my first epistle – ***But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.***

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.⁶

Brothers and sisters, you have a glorious sign and more than a sign. You have His Word joined to water with His full promise and life and grace and every blessing. You once lay dead in sin and fear, like me, but Christ has touched you. In the waters of baptism, He has walked over to you, touched you and spoken to you, “Rise and have no fear.”

⁵ 2 Peter 1:3–21

⁶ 1 Peter 3:14–22

You are forgiven, resorted and renewed. You are given a new, regenerated life that speaks and does the things of God. He will use you and your words and your actions for the good of those around you. He will take what may not look like much, and bless it beyond your understanding.

As a great reminder of this promise and blessing that was given to you, you can make the sign of the cross. No, it is not a magic talisman or a lucky charm, it is simply a reminder. You can make it any time you need the reminder, and I need it quite often. Two important times are in the morning when you wake up and in the evening when you lie down to sleep. The morning reminds you that you are in this world with its trials and temptations, it crosses and sufferings; but this is also the same day that the Lord has made. You can rejoice and be glad in it, because this day is given to you. He has baptized you for this moment and you can approach this day without fear. If God is for you, who can be against you? My brother Paul has a whole section on that.

Then in the evening, you can again make the sign of the cross and remember your baptism when you sleep. Whatever failures and sins you have committed, you can rest assured that they are drowned in the font, drowned in the blood of Christ. Your payment for sin is finished and heaven is open to you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do not be discouraged by the slow passing seemingly endless days. While they seem the same, they are quite different. The end is coming ever nearer— *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.*¹⁵ *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,*¹⁶ *as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*¹⁷ *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.*¹⁸ *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*⁷

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

⁷ 2 Peter 3:14–18

Prayer of the Church

The Transfiguration of Our Lord: 29 January 2023

Heavenly Father, You revealed Your glory in the transfiguration of Your Son, who tabernacled among us in the flesh. Open our eyes, that by faith we would see Him continuing to tabernacle among us in the Divine Service. Grant that we would heed Your admonition to “listen to Him” as He forgives and preserves us at the font, pulpit and altar. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we ask for Your blessing on this congregation, especially for our catechumens. As Moses was changed when he saw Your glory on Mount Sinai, may we who have beheld Your glory in the face of Christ also be transformed and given boldness of spirit to share Your glory abroad. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, your Son is the true light, who lightens all in darkness and the shadow of death. Raise up, equip, and send forth faithful pastors, directors of Christian Education, teachers, deaconesses, and all laborers needed for the advancement of your kingdom. Shine within their hearts the undying flame of your Son's love as they bring your Word of mercy to the sorrowful and distressed. Through the office of the holy ministry and the faithful preaching and administration of your gifts, refresh and preserve the souls of all as we eagerly await the blessed day of your Son's return and life beyond all tears and sinning. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, bless the families of Your Church, that parents would teach the faith to their children and that the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in all households. Remember also all expectant mothers, that they and their babies would be kept safe and healthy throughout their pregnancies. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, You alone establish all authority on earth. Bless those entrusted with authority both here and abroad to serve with integrity and honor for the well-being of all. Grant that all division, conflict and strife would give way to unity, peace and quietness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all comfort, You alone bring the peace that passes understanding to troubled hearts. Remember the afflicted, *especially Marvin, Ruth, Zoey, Greg, Sandy, David, Pastor Jerry Doelinger, Jill, Pastor Small, Debbie and those we name in our hearts*, that they would know Your presence, taste Your peace and receive healing according to Your gracious will, ever trusting in the hope of the resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation, bless those who celebrate baptismal anniversaries this week, especially, *Sherry, Darlo, Tyler, and Amaya*, bless also those who celebrate another year of earthly life, especially *Lauren*. Grant that they may grow in grace, continue to know Your loving-kindness, abide in the confession of Your care and protection, serve You faithfully all the days of their life and finally come to the fullness of Your joys in heaven; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the joy and blessings that You have granted *Dale & Miriam* during the years of their marriage. Assist them always by Your grace that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may ever honor and keep their marriage vows, grow in love towards You and for each other, and come at last to the eternal joys that You have promised; Lord in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Father, look favorably on all who come to the Holy Communion today. Grant them a living faith to find at this table spiritual sustenance for their earthly pilgrimage and a foretaste of the glories to come. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, Your power is beyond compare and Your glory beyond understanding. Open our hearts to know You through the glory of Your Son, whose saving will and purpose has rescued us from sin and death and made us Your own people by Baptism and faith; for to You, blessed and eternal Father, belong all honor and glory, worship and praise, with Your beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**