

What Made Jesus Shine?  
TCC  
February 11, 2018

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. We focus on the story of Jesus' transfiguration, or being light-filled, such that the disciples were amazed. There was glory all around, something that reflects the Christmas story and might tempt us all to say that Jesus shined because, well, he was *Jesus*. And that's that. That is the simple answer and it's not a bad one. But, remember, that disciples are *students*, and therefore, we are not just blind worshipers, but we are those who would learn from our teacher, and therefore get at least glimpses, if not instructions and guidelines about how to become *like him*. In John 14:12 Jesus foretells his death and says that those who believe in him will do far greater things than even he did. So, I am interested in that. I am interested in the teachings and the reality of the possibility that I could do something, be something, shine something, like Jesus.

I like darkness. I cover the big bright digital clock at night to make my room darker and sleep better. I like to allow my eyes to re-adjust in the middle of the night if I get up, and walk slowly in the dark. ("I don't need no stinkin' night light.") But early in the morning when I go downstairs to the kitchen for coffee, I need a little light. I take my phone, which has been charging by my bed. It's all I need. I turn on the little light above the stove and I can see fine. Later, after coffee, prayers and some conversation with my husband, I need to start my day. I need more light. Sometimes I go outside and see the lint and cat hair on my outfit and realize I needed A LOT more light. So, the light increases as our need to see increases. It just makes sense.

A Rumi poem goes like this:  
Pale sunlight, pale the wall  
The light changes  
Love moves way  
I need more grace than I thought

You could say that grace gives us light. But if we are not fully plugged in, if our batteries are not charged, if we are not even aware that the light and our seeing has changed and even dimmed, we could find ourselves

walking in darkness. We could find ourselves bumping into stuff. We could find ourselves tumbling over a cliff. We need God, we need God's thoughts, not our own. We need to recharge and we may not even know we're running down until it's almost too late (or later than we thought).

What made Jesus shine? Here is my assertion: *Jesus was fully plugged in to the light and love of God at all times.* He understood that his thoughts were nothing without God's thoughts. All of his strength, his talents, his sparkling personality and his earthly gifts were just so much "fluff" without the light of God. Jesus had this firmly planted in his being. He was nothing without God.

Just like you and me, the only difference being that we think we can get by on our own gifts, our own talents and our own creative thinking, our own "strong suits," if you will. And we can get by. But we won't shine much.

We can be clever. We can be well read. We can be hardworking. We can be very, very talented, nice, friendly, good with numbers, great cooks, faithful spouses, terrific public speakers, singers, piano players, writers, you name it, we got it, in the world, and even in our church. But without the light of God, without the beauty of God's love and mercy, God's grace Artificial light is necessary, but it is not real light. Real light reveals beauty. Real light creates love and forgiveness. Real light shines away dark thoughts of revenge and separation and sorrow.

Our thoughts create darkness or light. Jesus knew this; that's why he spent time praying, meditating, in solitude and quiet. Jesus understood that spending time and energy on what doesn't matter literally eclipses what actually does matter. That's why he shone so brightly.

Our task as a spiritual community is to shine. To understand that our faith is not a label, not a set of rules, not even a collection of lovely time-worn rituals. Our faith is a journey from darkness to light, day by day, moment by moment.