

**Church of the Divine Love**  
**Last Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**February 14, 2021 10:15 A.M.**  
**Morning Prayer, Rite I**

*Please observe silence after altar candles are lit*    *All pages refer to The Book of Common Prayer*

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## Sermon Sunday February 14, 2021

2 Kings 2: 1-12; Psalm 50: 1-6; 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6; Mark 9: 2-9

**Dear people of God,**

**Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The sequence of events in the life and ministry of Jesus are important for many reasons. One reason has to do with His pastoral relationship to His disciples and ultimately to each one of us. He was bringing them along in their faith so that after He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended, they would have a foundation on which to build their lives. Of course, the sequence of events in Jesus' life and ministry serves the same purpose in our lives too.

This morning is Transfiguration Sunday. Jesus went up on a mountain, taking Peter, James, and John along with Him. There, they witnessed his transfiguration. The word that is translated as "transfigured," in most of our English translations, is "metamorphose," the word from which we get our English word metamorphosis. On the mountain, Jesus underwent a metamorphosis. To describe the event, Mark says "His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them." Moses and Elijah, two of the Old Testament saints representing the Law and the Prophets, appeared on the mountain as well. Peter was overcome with the sight of the Transfigured Jesus, so much so, that he wanted to just stay there on the mountain forever.

We will come back to the Transfiguration in a few minutes, but it would be helpful if we took a few moments to consider it in its context, again, because the sequence of events in the life and ministry of Jesus are important. In the section of Mark's Gospel just before this morning's reading, Jesus had spoken to His disciples about His impending death and resurrection. He said, "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. Though Jesus only told His disciples what He knew they were able to handle at any given time, Peter didn't seem to be prepared at all for the course of events Jesus described. Consequently, he took Jesus aside and he began to rebuke Him. Can you imagine that a disciple rebuking Jesus? What was that like, I wonder? I mean, what might Peter have said when he rebuked Jesus? Jesus, you have got this all wrong! Jesus, you are not going to die! Jesus, we have got your back! We will take care of you! We will protect you! You have got nothing to worry about! Mind you, whatever Peter said when he rebuked Jesus, keep in mind that Peter is the man who ultimately denied that he even knew Jesus, not once, but three times. But lest we be too hard on Peter, he was just doing and saying what everyone else was probably thinking. As you know, Jesus, in turn, rebuked Peter because he did not understand that the cross and suffering had to come before glory. In fact, in trying to prevent Jesus from making His way to Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross, Peter was doing the devil's bidding. "Get behind me, Satan (Jesus said)! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Wow! How many times might those words, or words like them, be said to us, to you!? "You're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Right after Jesus rebuked Peter, He called the crowd and His disciples to Him and said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." Again, the very thing that Peter wanted to avoid, namely sacrifice and suffering, would be, not only part of Jesus' life, but part of his own life, as well as the life of every disciple of Jesus. With that little bit of background, let's go back

now to Mark's account of the Transfiguration. He begins the narrative with a time reference, which puts the event into a particular context. "And after six days Jesus took with Him, Peter, James and John and went up on a high mountain." The six days is about the previous discourse where Jesus talked about His imminent death and resurrection. Again, the sequence of events is important because, not only do the individual events of Jesus' life teach us something about life and faith, but the events in their proper order also teach us something too. In this case, suffering and death come before glory! The cross comes before the resurrection! The one who follows Jesus is to deny himself and take up his cross before he enters glory! Those statements make up the sum of our lives in Christ, don't they? Self-denial and suffering before glory!

The thing is, we are much more enamored by glory than by suffering and self-denial. When Peter witnessed the Transfiguration, he was captured, if you will, by Jesus' glory, evidenced by the fact that he wanted to stay on the mountain. He was ready to set up three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Perhaps he forgot that his wife was somewhere down at the bottom of the mountain. Perhaps he forgot that he had responsibilities to fulfill as a husband. Evidently, like all of us, he preferred glory over sacrifice and suffering and so, he was ready to stay there on the mountain. Who doesn't though? That is, who does not prefer glory over sacrifice and suffering? Well, while it might be natural to prefer glory to suffering, we need not look at suffering anymore the way we did outside of Christ. Outside of Christ suffering is just suffering, but in Christ is a part of God's great plan to bring us from this vale of tears to our future glory. The fact is suffering is mentioned in a positive sense over and over again in the Scriptures. For instance, in Romans 5, Paul says, "since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings." Did you catch that? We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings. It is not that we rejoice because of our suffering, that, I suppose, would make us mosaicists of a sort. We do not rejoice because of our sufferings, but we can and do rejoice in them. Jesus dealt with His disciples in a very pastoral way, just as He deals with us in the same way. In the sequence of events in His life and ministry, He wants us to learn something, something profound. Cross and glory are not mutually exclusive categories. Rather, they are the divinely ordained sequence of salvation, both for the one who accomplishes it, that is, Jesus, and for those who receive it in him, that is, you and me.

O Holy One, on mountaintops and valley floors you reveal to us the light of your love. Our hearts desire is to bask in the amazing glory of the divine presence. With each encounter we are changed and transformed. Draw us nearer that we might receive a double portion of your Holy Spirit. Help us, O Holy One, to live our lives as a reflection of divine glory. May we walk among our siblings and friends as a blessing, bearing light into dark places, hope to displace despair, and love that casts out hate. Our world is hurting, and we need the followers of Jesus to follow more closely. Maybe then we will hear your voice speaking to us and saying, "listen to my Child, the Beloved!" We are entering the season of Lent, a time to grow closer to God, to become more faithful as we follow Jesus. It is a time to look deeply inside our own hearts to see what holds us back from becoming all that God created us to be, and to repent of the distractions we let come between us and the God who loves us. It is a time to grow more deeply connected to Christ, to seek for him in scripture and in prayer. **Amen!**

## Prayer for Grace and Favor in the New Year:

Dear God, we ask that you provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us; we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but say, "these are the ones that the Lord has blessed." Shine your light in us, through us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

### PARISH PRAYER LIST

Barbara Curran	Phil and Family
Dina Palkowski	Margaret
Frances & Donna Mongelli	Bernie Walther
Nathan Treadwell	Susan Hanaway
Tyler Gorman	Kim
Chris Dickson	Rachael
Michael Echevarria	Caesar
Donny	Bill Conklin
Michael & Family	Anthony Paribello
Martinisi Family	Edward Lent
Matt Marricco	Kate Jones
Kathleen	Del
Irene	Girard Bishop
Warren	Lois Kessler

### Children who are ill:

Franklin Tenesaca	Ciara Berbeck
Michael	Christopher
Gabriel	Emily