

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Transfiguration Sunday - Year C

Baptism of Megan, Asher, and Alex Bruff

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Exodus 34:29-35

Pslam 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke:

28Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 36When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable to you O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Transfiguring**

Good Morning! Dr. Greg Carey sums up both today's assigned text and today's baptismal context. "*Luke's disciples need a revelatory experience in order to appreciate Jesus' true identity and vocation.*"<sup>1</sup> The Transfiguration is a giant slap on the head for the disciples, showing them who Jesus truly is, and the disciples misunderstand the whole thing. It's the same for us and our baptisms. Here, in those waters, God calls us to eternal life, and we often forget the central message or the magnitude of what happens. We can often spend our lives searching for a powerful spiritual experience. Sometimes people will say that unless our faith life is filled with special spiritual callings, then we're doing something wrong.

We do the same things the disciples do in the text: we try to control the experience, to put limits on what's happening. Peter tries to build dwellings for the three men. We try to control baptism with things like arguing over infant or adult baptism, whether someone is sprinkled or dunked. And throughout the whole experience God is manifesting power and grace, calling on us to listen to Jesus!

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3972](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3972)

Today is a feast day. That's why everything is white. Transfiguration Sunday and the last feast day before the season of Lent. We also celebrate the baptism of three members of this congregation. Megan, Asher, and Alex Bruff join the Christian family. The history of baptismal practices is longer than what I could squeeze into a sermon, but a few things are interesting. In the first hundred or so years after the death and resurrection of Christ the Church became more and more organized. In the beginning the structure was a little like the wild west, often looking to the Apostles or their students for guidance. Baptisms were done whenever they decided they needed to be done. As the Church grew, this began to change. When someone wanted to become a Christian they became the fancy word "*catechumenate*" which is Greek for "one being instructed." It's where we get the word catechism. This was usually a year-long period of instruction, and there was one baptism for everyone, and it took place on Easter morning. The catechumenates would gather together with the Bishop at dawn and renounce the devil, spitting to the west before turning to face the sunrise in the east.

As Christianity became more and more of an institution the practice of infant baptism began to become more and more popular. Christianity wasn't a religion that required us to convert others, and the next generations of Christians were already being raised in the faith. The once-a-year baptism began to fade, but it still lives on in some ways. Easter morning is still the preferred time for a baptism, but one time is certainly not preferred, and that's the season of Lent. Starting on Wednesday, over the next six weeks, we won't be having any baptisms, and so Transfiguration Sunday is our last chance to dunk Asher before April 21st.

Infant baptism, what will happen to Alex, is the perfect metaphor for our faith and the text we have today. Alex will never remember his baptism, and yet it will be a defining mark on his life. It will be all the mountaintop experiences a life could desire, and he will never know. I sometimes wonder if infant baptism began because we just couldn't fathom what was actually happening in those waters. Maybe when it takes place as we are children we can have a lifetime to try and understand God's grace.

But we never truly understand what God is doing in our lives. In the ancient world gods existed on mountain tops, that's why Peter tries to build a dwelling place. People traveled to where the gods were, if they were brave enough. And it's here that our experience with God differs from others. Our baptisms are a mark that God has come DOWN to us! We don't need to travel up some mountain to meet our God, we just need to look around to know that God is a part of our lives.

Stop and think about that for a minute. In those waters God made a promise to you that God would NEVER abandon you. At no point in your lives will you be without the promise of love and compassion that accompanies God.

Which brings me to my challenge. Alex, and maybe Asher, will forget this powerful experience. They will face challenges in their lives that will seem impossibly challenging. But today you will make a promise before God and this assembly that you will be there to help them. Tim and Megan will have their hands full, and so it falls on not just them, but all of us, to show them what it means to grow up in the faith of Jesus Christ. Our mountaintop experience is never truly over, we just don't understand it. But thankfully, we don't need to. God's understands, and God's never going to forget, that's a promise. Amen.