

## **“Transfiguration”**

Luke 9:28-36, 37-43

18 February 2007

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Luke 9:28-36, 37-43

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now 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. Just 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. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ When 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.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.’ Jesus answered, ‘You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.’ While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

Prayer.

My father had worn it  
as proud as a medal  
pinned upon his chest:  
“I’m a jack of all trades,  
and a master of none,”  
he would say.

“It means you are lousy  
at everything,” I recall  
thinking to myself  
when I was a defiant teen-ager.

In his lifespan, he had  
been a sailor,  
saving the world for democracy

from the Japanese;  
he had been a welder,  
constructing hulls of submarines  
and elevator shafts for the  
St. Louis arch;  
he had been a builder,  
working with my uncle to  
build the family house  
from the footer to the peak;  
he had been an accountant,  
taking classes to get his  
credentials  
so he could count beans  
for Harbinson-Carborundum;  
he had become a preacher  
starting back to college  
finishing seminary  
and serving churches  
throughout upstate New York.  
“We changed churches,  
parsonages, and school districts,  
faster than you could shake a stick,”  
my mother would likely say.

One life, one family, one calling  
appealed to me.  
I admired members of my father's  
parish  
who lived all their life in one house  
or neighborhood,  
who worked the same job  
who enjoyed a quality of life  
rooted in consistency.  
Job security based on a guaranteed  
appointment in the most tightly  
controlled union on the planet  
appealed to me.  
So I relied upon the strength of faith,  
jumped through the hoops,  
and found myself,  
like my father,  
serving a parish  
prepared for an honorable 40 year

calling, to be completed with  
a few words for the bishop and  
a gold watch  
at some future retirement dinner.

I grew uneasy, however.  
Spiritually, I wasn't being fed.  
And, it was becoming harder to  
feed the people.

You can not change the past;  
only the future.  
And my past had been one  
of constant change  
based upon my father's development.

Instead of moving to another  
parish and starting all over again,  
I recognized that God had been  
preparing me for a lifetime of change  
by giving me different interests and  
skills.

In seminary, I had spent three years  
working in crisis intervention and  
mental health.  
And I loved it!  
A skill that God had uncovered.  
A passion for people and the painful  
burdens  
they carry.  
Even before I became fully self-aware  
I was moonlighting  
at Clifton Springs Hospital and Clinic.  
And so has my life changed  
ever evolving  
using numerous and different talents  
with which God has blessed.  
“You've become a jack of all trades,  
and a master of none,” I can imagine  
my father whispering to me  
from the great beyond.  
Though, I don't believe there  
would be disapproval in his voice.

Change is essential for survival.

Change is essential for survival.  
You only have to take a look around you  
to recognize this fact.  
If you don't keep up,  
you get steam rolled over,  
I recall hearing somewhere.

I'm reading an exceptional book  
"The World is Flat"  
by the economist Thomas L. Friedman.  
He supports this observation about  
change:  
There have been ten forces that  
have changed the world since the fall of  
the Berlin Wall in 1989.  
These include,  
open-sourcing,  
collaborative software,  
outsourcing,  
off shoring,  
supply chaining,  
insourcing, and  
in-forming.  
Friedman describes  
how free trade  
has taken manufacturing from  
America, to Mexico, and now to China.  
He outlines how India and China  
crank out 350,000 college trained  
engineers a year, while  
America supply of engineering students  
is continuing to fall to under 65,000.  
He warns of the danger of failing  
to adopt to changes yet to come:  
facts such as  
over 1,100 new cars being added to  
the streets of Beijing DAILY,  
exploding hydrocarbon energy  
consumption,  
global warming,

and political instability.  
He speaks to the unstablizing  
characteristics  
of radical, violent Islamic extremists,  
the widening gap between  
the educated and the uneducated,  
the haves and the have nots,  
and the dangers of throwing up walls,  
protectionism, and nationalism.  
In a post Cold War, dot-com implosion,  
9/11 world  
the opportunities and the risks  
associated with change  
are simply awesome.  
Interestingly, he suggests  
that the greatest opportunities for  
workers  
will be for those who don't specialize,  
because other cultures have learned to  
duplicate  
a seemingly endless supply  
of engineers, scientists, and  
professionals.  
The greatest opportunity will be  
for creative generalists,  
people who are always updating their  
skills,  
people who can do many things well,  
people who some would call  
jacks of all trades, but masters of none.

There is nothing like being humbled by  
irony.

Change is essential for survival;  
whether you are talking about  
global economics,  
career choices,  
or a life of faith.  
Stagnant water  
becomes the perfect incubator  
for bacterial blooms,  
disgusting slime,

and oxygen starved water.  
Fast running  
mountain or spring fed streams  
is where one can find pure water,  
and a never ending source of life.

“What was so wrong with  
Jesus?” you may ask.  
“He had been chosen and baptized.  
He had assembled his disciples  
and had taken his efforts cross-country.  
He had progressively growing crowds  
to hear him preach,  
a seemingly unending supply  
of the diseased, sick, and demon  
possessed  
to heal;  
what else could Jesus want?  
Why change success?”

God's greater plan requires change.

Had Jesus lived out his  
life and ministry confined to Galilee,  
teaching and healing  
as he had successfully been doing,  
where would we be today?

God sent his Son to save  
the world;  
not just some obscure population  
two thousand years ago  
and half a world away.  
The world includes the planet.  
The world includes humanity  
from before time until after time  
concludes.  
The world includes you and me.

God's greater plan requires change.  
Jesus needed to change  
the direction and face of his ministry,  
and this is exactly what is symbolized

with his transfiguration  
on top of a Galilean mountain  
this morning.

Salvation comes to you and me  
because Jesus set his sights beyond  
Galilee,  
because he turned and faced Jerusalem,  
because he embraced the way of the  
cross,  
its passion, torture and death.  
Atonement -  
the forgiveness of sins -  
is won for us with the cross of Christ.  
And salvation -  
the pathway to eternal life -  
is set for us with the resurrection from  
the grave.  
Neither of which would be possible,  
had Jesus not faced the challenge of  
transfiguration  
on Galilee's lofty mountain top.

Do I need to connect the dots for you?

Change is essential for survival;  
whether we are talking about  
global economics,  
career choices,  
or a life of faith.

It is not enough to be  
a frozen chosen Christian  
in today's world.  
It is not enough to  
slide through baptism or confirmation  
never to cross the thresh-hold  
of the front doors again.  
It is not enough to  
park ourselves comfortably in the pews  
each Christmas and Easter,  
paying lip service, but little else.  
It is not

even enough  
to attend each Sunday,  
and to remain unmoved by the needs of  
the world  
that surround us.  
Christ calls us to be encountered by his  
Good News,  
and to make changes to our lives  
accordingly.  
Christ calls us to become  
engaged in a relationship with him,  
and as a result,  
to work and act on his behalf  
in mission, ministry and evangelism  
making connections with the world  
around us.  
A life of Christ  
engaged in the world  
is defined by change  
whether we like it or not.

“Oh, how I'd like to be led to the  
promised land  
just to be left alone,” we think to  
ourselves.

“Oh, how I'd like to take that perfect  
position or job  
and live life  
happily ever after,” just as many  
fairly tales mistakenly lure us to believe.

But our Gospel lesson  
tells us just the opposite this morning:  
we must face the changing nature of the  
world,  
with a changing strategy  
to win people for Jesus Christ.  
Just as Jesus was transformed and  
changed  
in front of his disciples,  
leading to his journey towards  
Jerusalem,  
so too must we be prepared to change.

The strategies we've used in the past  
are becoming increasingly futile.  
No longer is it enough to send money  
overseas,  
today we have to make the blankets  
then send them.  
No longer is it enough to take a special  
collection for the food pantry,  
today we have to collect the canned  
goods.  
No longer is it enough to simply invite a  
friend to church,  
today we have to keep them coming  
with genuine  
support, kindness, and hospitality.

“How and where do we even begin?”  
you ask.  
And “how do we know we are on the  
right track?”

The strategy of transfiguration  
is one of assessment, adaption, and  
repetition.

Number one: Assess.  
Where we?  
What can we do?  
And where is God leading us?  
These are the questions of assessment.  
It doesn't matter where we've come  
from.  
It doesn't even matter to look at what  
used to be successful.  
What matters is where are we NOW?  
What can we do TODAY?  
And where is God leading me  
TOMORROW?

Number two: Adapt.  
It isn't enough to have a vision.  
To be transfigurational people,  
we must be willing to change,

to impliment,  
to put vision into action.  
Vision without action is daydreaming.  
Action without vision is pointless  
wandering.  
It isn't enough to talk about mission,  
ministry, and evangelism,  
we have to roll up our sleeves and to do  
it!

to keep faith alive, healthy, and  
growing.  
It may be unsettling,  
but it is just the way  
the good Lord  
created the world,  
relates to the world,  
and keeps it drawing ever closer to Him.

Amen.

Finally: we are called to repeate.  
Repeate the process all over again  
as soon as a new day dawns.  
Where we are at tomorrow  
isn't going to be where we are at today,  
and it certainly isn't where we were at  
yesterday.

Assess, adapt, and repeate -  
this is the strategy Christ is calling us to  
employ,  
so we can keep pace,  
even keep a little bit ahead of the curve,  
in today's massively changing world  
environment.

“Just give me that old time religion”  
many continue to protest.  
“Don't give me the Internet, podcasts, or  
powerpoints.”  
“Don't send me a woman pastor  
or fill our pews with illegal immigrints,”  
some continue to resist.

But I'm here to tell you,  
and Jesus is here to tell you this  
morning,  
that a transfigurational approach to  
faith  
is one that sees change  
recognizes the need for change  
and whole-heartedly embraces change  
as a necessary means