



Sermon: “The Greatness of God- Revealed”  
Scripture: Luke 9:28-36  
Location: First Presbyterian Church of Lake Mary

Pastor: Hugh Lackey  
Occasion: Worship  
Date: February 14, 2010

We are celebrating two important days, today. First, we romantics or at least wise men remember it is Valentine’s Day. That requires us to act. Here are some stats. About typical actions:

- 110 million roses, the majority color red, will be sold and delivered within a three-day time period.
- 15% of U.S. women send themselves flowers on Valentine's Day.
- 73% of people who buy flowers for Valentine's Day are men, while only 27 percent are women.
- More than 35 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate will be sold for Valentine's Day.
- While 75% of chocolate purchases are made by women all year long, during the days and minutes before Valentine's Day, 75% of the chocolate purchases are made by men.
- Over \$1billion USD worth of chocolate is purchased for Valentine's Day.
- One-third of all Valentine cards are accompanied by gifts.
- About 3% of pet owners will give Valentine's Day gifts to their pets. (Probably chocolate.)
- The most fantastic gift of love is the Taj Mahal in India. It was built by Mughal Emperor Shahjahan as a memorial to his wife.
- Another special gift was the Marble House. It was given to the wife of a Rockefeller son for their wedding and cost \$11M in 1901. Three years later, she divorced him, took the house and eleven others and married the man across the street!



Even with beautiful gifts relationship can be difficult at times, as this teacher explained to her colleague:

When a woman on the staff of the school where I worked became engaged, a friend and colleague offered her some advice.

'The first ten years are the hardest.'

'How long have you been married?' she asked.

'Ten years', he replied.

We also celebrate a significant event in the church calendar today. It is the Transfiguration of the Lord; the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany and the beginning of our walk, as disciples, to Jerusalem and the cross with Jesus.

Hear the Word of the Lord as Luke tells the story of this very special and important event in the lives of three disciples and in the lives of all of us who call ourselves “Disciples of Christ.” It is the story about the Greatness of God being revealed.

*<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were*

*terrified as they entered the cloud.*<sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “*This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!*”<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

Let us first, put this event in context. Jesus has just finished feeding the five thousand. Later, while praying with His disciples, Jesus asked who the crowd thought He was. Then He asked the disciples who they thought He was and Peter responded, *The Messiah of God.*<sup>2</sup>

Jesus *sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone,*<sup>22</sup> saying, *The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*<sup>3</sup> He ends the conversation with this promise, *but truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.*<sup>4</sup>

The events that follow fulfill that promise, but before we consider what happened on the mountain, let us think about what did not happen when Peter, James, and John were invited to join Jesus on the hillside.

There was no magical transformation that made Jesus become something that He had not been before. Jesus – Son of God – has the same eternal qualities as God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Even as His outward appearance changed, Jesus remained who He always was: God’s Son, Light of the world, and counterpart to Moses and Elijah.

The transfiguration was not something to make Jesus different, but an event that allowed the greatness of God to be revealed to these three disciples. It was an Epiphany in the truest sense. Their eyes were opened and they were able to see Jesus, their companion in ministry, for who He truly was.

The transfiguration was a multi-sensory experience.

First, the disciples saw Jesus’ face change. Right before their very eyes they saw *the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.* It was as if he reflected the light of heaven. That’s a pretty amazing sight; one we will all see one day.

Second, the disciples saw Moses and Elijah standing and talking to Jesus. Remember both of these prophets had been dead for hundreds of years, so seeing them startled the onlookers. The Son of God was standing with two faithful prophets who had served God faithfully to the end, and it was a shock for the disciples to see.

Their appearance points out the unique connection between them and Jesus.

✠ Moses had been the deliverer of the Israelites from bondage; he led them across the Red Sea and to the promise Land. Jesus would be the new deliverer who would, through His sacrifice on the cross, deliver His people from the bondage of sins and give them access to eternal life. Now they stand shoulder to shoulder discussing and forecasting the work yet to be done. The works that will be accomplished on Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 9:28-36

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 9:20

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 9:21-22

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 9:27

- ✠ Elijah had led his people away from worshipping the false gods that Queen Jezebel and her husband King Ahab embraced. He raised people from the dead and when his work was done God swept him away in a whirlwind to heaven. Elijah was meant to announce the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 17: 10-13). Now as Jesus stands by his side, He prepares to take up the mantle, as the Messiah, and fulfill the mission for which He had been sent by God.

Third, the disciples not only got to see Christ’s transformation, they also got to hear the voice of God. *Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen;listen to him!”* These words were almost identical to those spoken, three years earlier, when Jesus began His earthly at the river Jordan, *“You are my Son, the Beloved;with you I am well pleased.”*<sup>5</sup> Both statements announce, with clarity, the identity of Jesus, as the Son of God.

These revelations gave the disciples a more complete picture of who Jesus was and what it would mean to follow Him. Before, coming up the mountain Jesus had told them *“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”*<sup>6</sup> Now, they had a better understanding what that would mean. To follow Jesus meant to be with the beloved and to stand with the prophets. That would be a privilege, but would come at a cost.

On the mountain, that day, these three disciples had:

- ✠ Seen the truth – Jesus was God
- ✠ Heard the truth – Jesus would offer Himself as the Lamb of God.

The story, however, did not end there. They could not stay on the mountain, dazzled by their epiphany. This new revelation, of the greatness of God, revealed who He was and what He had to do and the disciples would be witnesses as it He carried out His divine task.

The next passage, in Luke, reveals evidence of the real world that was waiting for Jesus and the disciples, when they came down the mountain. The town was in chaos. A boy had been possessed by demons, and his father asked the other disciples to heal him, but they could not.

They had not experienced the epiphany. They had not seen the greatness of God revealed to them. They were still mired in the worldly pain, fear, and doubt. When Jesus healed the boy, those witnessing the miracle, experienced a kind of transfiguration themselves, while there were no dazzling lights or voices from clouds. Jesus revealed the embodiment of compassion and grace through His acts. *And all were astounded at the greatness of God.*

This story reminds us that it is not enough to just look the part; it is not enough to have one’s title announced. What is required is to live the faith. Jesus called His disciples to a life of faith that heals, delivers, touches, transforms and changes lives. They and we are called to live a life that reflects the greatness of a God that is here with us, is all powerful, and is life changing.

As we prepare to walk, with Jesus, to Jerusalem and the cross,

- ✠ We, like the disciples, are invited to go on a journey of discovery.
- ✠ We are invited to follow and astonishing God.
- ✠ We are called to serve a God who is life changing.
- ✠ We are called to stand in the light.
- ✠ We are called to go with Jesus into pain, into need, and be a blessing.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 3:22

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Lk 9:23

The three disciples dared to follow Jesus up the mountain and they were astonished because they saw God’s dazzling light and heard God’s voice, and witnessed the healing power of God. They had seen the greatness of God revealed to them.

You and I have the same invitation. What do you see? If you are not astonished, every day, by the power of God, then you need to ask yourself if you are looking at the right place, at the right events, and you need to ask yourself if you are listening to the right voice. If each one of us is not aware of the greatness of God, each day of our lives, we need to ask why. Maybe we are not going into the village, as Jesus did, into need and pain trusting that God can and will make a difference.

Two weeks ago, Joe and I walked into the village (Haiti) and saw sights that will never leave our memories. There has not been a night since I returned from Haiti that I have not seen some of those scenes of destruction, devastation, and death during my sleep. But I also see scenes of people of faith seeking their epiphany, because they have seen and they know the greatness of God.

God is waiting to be revealed to us at this moment, if we will allow our eyes to be open to His light and our ears to hear His voice; a voice that proclaims the good news. The transfiguration of God is our epiphany where His greatness is revealed to us personally. It is given to us so we can act. We are invited to see and understand that greatness and then live with that blessing and to share the faith, hope, and love that have been revealed to us, with others.

I learned a new term last Sunday. That happens when you have people smarter than you in your company and are willing to listen to them. The next statements that I make are called a “Thematic Reprise;” that’s where I summarize what I have said and give you some “take away” suggestions.

So here it is- The transfiguration did nothing to change Jesus, but did everything to change the disciples. Through the light, the prophets, and the voice of God, they saw and understood the greatness of God. Jesus Christ was God incarnate, and their decision to follow Him was a commitment to live a life that would face pain, fear, doubt, and suffering, but they would do it with the revelation of the power and greatness of a living God. That same God offers Himself to each of us, and challenges us to be His witnesses in this broken world.

We are called to share that good news with other, but first we are invited to accept the invitation to go to the mountain and witness the greatness of God.

- ✠ If you have not done so, make that your priority and I stand ready to walk up the mountain with you, so you can see and know the greatness of God.
- ✠ If you have, then tell others that if they are will to look and listen then they too can see the greatness of God revealed in their lives.

Today is Valentine’s Day. The annual event when we, romantics, are to tell others that we love them. For Christ-Followers, every day is Valentine’s Day, because He shows that He loves us, daily; and we have the privilege of revealing His greatness through our words and actions towards others.

By God’s grace may we do so...