

The Transfiguration of our Lord

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

Happy Valentine's Day! Established in 269 AD by Pope Gelasius I, February 14th was designated to be the day of St. Valentine of Rome, replacing an old Roman holiday. But it wasn't until the 14th and 15th centuries that it was associated with the notion of love. And it wasn't until the 18th century that it began to be associated with the presentation of flowers and candy as well as sending greeting cards. And it wasn't until the 19th century that Valentine's Day cards became mass-produced. However, as part of the Second Vatican Council, with revisions of the liturgical calendar, St. Valentine's day is no longer recognized by the Roman Catholic church.

While we don't necessarily follow *that* liturgical calendar in the Lutheran Church, there are some congregations that like to recognize special days that are called festivals and feasts. While a feast is a day set aside to commemorate a special person or saint such as St. Valentine, festivals are wider in scopes such as Reformation Day or All Saints Day. And during the season of Epiphany, while the day of Epiphany was a festival day in the front of the hymnal, there are two listed – the Baptism of our Lord and the Transfiguration of our Lord. One towards the beginning of the season and one at the end. And so, while Valentine's Day has become primarily a secular observance thanks to greeting card companies like Hallmark, the Transfiguration of our Lord is still celebrated in the church today.

Now, before the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were there when Jesus told his disciples “...**that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priest and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.**” (8:31) They didn’t want that to happen, so Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him because it was all part of God’s plan for salvation. And so, after six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the mountain.

After getting to the place where He wanted them to be, He stood before them and right before their very eyes, Jesus was transfigured to reveal His glorious, divine nature. It was in the brilliance of His glory that they understood more than ever that Jesus was more than someone special. His clothes became intensely radiant, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them. And they also saw Moses and Elijah standing there talking with Jesus. Moses, who had received the law of God from God Himself, and one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, Elijah, who had defended God’s law. There they were together up on that mountain. It was a sight to behold because it revealed God’s glory veiled in the humble flesh and blood of Jesus.

Peter, James, and John believed that truly Jesus is the Son of God. Terrified and yet not wanting the experience to end, Peter said to Jesus, “**Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.**” And then, a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying “**This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.**” (9:7) And while the Father said to Jesus at His Baptism, “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**” (1:11) This is the first time, according to St. Mark’s Gospel, that God the Father spoke directly to the disciples.

You and I, as well as other believers, know that Jesus is the Son of God and that we need to listen to Him. We know it because of the

faith that we have been given to see the Words and hear the Word of God. We're able to see with our own eyes, the divine glory of the Son of God when we read the Word of God. We hear the words of God Himself and believe, even when we read St. John Gospel when it says, ***"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:14)

In time, Jesus went on to be lifted high upon a cross on Mount Calvary where His Glory would be revealed to an even greater extent as He died for the sins of the whole world. He did out of His great love, grace, and mercy for us so that when we repent of our faithless sins of doubt, anxiousness, frustration, and self-centeredness, and might be forgiven by God the Father. Leaving those things behind us, we're able to see anew, full of the hope and possibility that only He can provide to us, even in the midst of a pandemic.

There are many who find it difficult to think of Jesus as anyone more than Joseph and Mary's son. And while they might say that Jesus was a carpenter from Nazareth and may even go along with the belief that Jesus was a good teacher, prophet, and preacher, maybe even a healer, it might be too much for them to believe that Jesus IS the Son of God. To which even the Scriptures testifies that ***"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power."*** (Hebrews 1:3a) The Word of God, His Glory seen in Jesus and believing that Jesus is God's own Son doesn't depend on any human to make it true. God is God and His ways are higher than our way. And yet, His way makes it possible, through His abundant Love, Grace, and Mercy, for all to believe by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today in the church is the celebration of the Transfiguration of our Lord as well as St. Valentine's Day along with the secular world

around us. Knowing that God loves us so much that He willingly sent to us His one and only Son Jesus so that we might be able to experience Him together. By His Spirit, He gave to us faith to be able to believe this and listen to what His Words have to say to us in our lives so that we might love God with all our heart, minds, and souls and love our neighbors as ourselves so that in the end we might experience the glory that will be revealed to us when He comes again at the end of time.

Throughout the season of Epiphany, we've experienced Jesus together and have seen that Jesus is much, much more than any saint. Officially beginning on Epiphany Day when the Magi followed the Star of Bethlehem looking for one who was born King of the Jews. Then recalling Jesus' Baptism and coming to understand that after Jesus came up out of the water the Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove, and a voice from Heaven said to Him, ***"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*** From there, Jesus went on to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God and He called His first disciples. He taught with authority and exorcised demons. He performed miraculous healings, but what was most important was the preaching of the Good News of the Gospel. And after going up on a high mountain, the Glory of God was revealed in the flesh and blood of Jesus to His disciples.

As His disciples, He calls each of us to our mission here at Our Savior's Way, which is to Form relationships, experience Jesus together, and share God's love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.