

Order of Worship for February 27, 2022
Transfiguration Sunday

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: “O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair” – Hymn #413

The Call to Worship

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: The season of Epiphany reaches its climax this day of Transfiguration. We now hear of the first Transfiguration from Luke’s Gospel: Luke 9:28–36

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 as He was praying, the appearance of His face was altered, and His clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw Jesus’ glory and the two men who stood with Him. And as the men were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

C: **Lord Jesus Christ, You are the light of the world. Wise men, guided by light, came to worship You, and we kneel in spirit with them. You calmed the storm, healed the hurting, and released the imprisoned soul; You gave to us the peace of God, the power of hope, and the liberty of forgiveness.**

P: Now, with Your disciples, You ascend the Mount of Transfiguration, there to converse with Lawgiver Moses and Prophet Elijah. Prepare our hearts to hear the Father’s words that place His signature on You: “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!”

C: **Through You, Lord Jesus, God places His signature on us. By faith we are chosen children of the heavenly Father.**

P: The time comes when our Lord must descend the mountain and enter the valley—the valley of rejection, of denial, and of crucifixion. Lent must come soon.

C: **Lord, grant that we follow You into the valley, for even in the valley of the shadow of death, life does not end. Easter follows, and life begins again. Teach us to live as Your resurrection people, O Lord, and let the joy of Easter victory that always follows the time in the valley transform this service of worship into a celebration on the mountain of faith, that we may all say, “’Tis good, Lord, to be here.”**

Hymn of Praise: “‘Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here” - **Hymn #414**

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. O God, in the glorious Transfiguration of Your beloved Son You confirmed the mysteries of the faith by the testimony of Moses and Elijah. In the voice that came from the bright cloud You wonderfully foreshowed our adoption by grace. Mercifully make us co-heirs with the King of His glory and bring us to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Deuteronomy 34:1–12

R: Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. And the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, and God buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed Joshua and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

R: This is the Word of our Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 3:1–6

R: Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to His Father who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

R: This is the Word of our Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Hymn: “*Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory*” - **Hymn #416** (Needs a soloist to introduce)

Sermon: “*Having What We Need*” - **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**

Scientists tell us we only use a part of the brain capacity we have. The recent Olympic Games remind us of how athletes continue to break records for speed, strength and endurance. But as pitchers report for spring training in baseball, there is one part of that game which seems to remain constant—pitching and hitting the baseball. We hear about amazing young baseball prospects throwing fastballs over 100 mph. That seems to be a lot better than the past. In the 1910’s they clocked Walter Johnson at 83 mph electronic signals. Iowa’s own Bob Feller was clocked at 98 versus a motorcycle. Using primitive radar they clocked Nolan Ryan in the 1980’s at near 100. But these all recorded the speeds when it got to the batter. Modern radars clock the speed soon after the pitcher releases the ball. Using modern technology they believe that Johnson actually pitched at 92, Feller at 104, and Ryan at 108! Extensive study by physicists shows that the human can only pitch the ball so fast—there isn’t much room for improvement.

Not only that, the distance from the pitcher’s mound to home plate seems to be the perfect distance for a balance between hitting the ball and striking out the batter. Increase the distance and hits would happen like a slow pitch softball game. Decrease it, and games would end in scoreless ties. It is the perfect distance for the limitation both for the pitchers’ arms and the batter’s ability to process the pitch.

We have limitations as humans.

Deuteronomy tells us that when Moses died, “His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.” That may not seem like a big deal to us, but in 1 Kings we read about a failing King David that he did not fit into that category of an “undimmed eye and a vigor unabated.” That caused a crisis in Israel because there was doubt then that David had what it took to rule. That crisis was only settled when David chose Solomon as his successor who in effect ruled in place of the dying king. But there was no such crisis with Moses. When he died, he was clearly the leader of God’s people Israel. He was given what he needed to do that.

This stands in contradiction to the way Moses felt about himself in Exodus 3 when God called him. Moses had every excuse in the book to get out of that responsibility. From the outside it could look that he was a good choice. He had been amazingly rescued from death when the Egyptian princess saw him as a baby hidden in a basket among the reeds of the Nile River. He was hidden because the King of Egypt had ordered that all Israelite boys were to be killed. But she adopted Moses as her own. His very name, “Moses” is Egyptian. He grew up as a prince of Egypt, which didn’t just mean he was well off, but he received an education and training in leadership. He did flee from Egypt when he killed an Egyptian slave driver who was abusing an Israelite slave, but that could be used as an emotional drive to continue to help his own people. But instead Moses felt he didn’t have what it took.

We began earlier this month a group that meets after the 11 AM service on Sundays to talk about sharing our faith. Compared with getting free tickets to an ISU game, going on spring break vacation, and attending an activity with free pizza, how appealing does it sound to us to talk to others about our faith? A far greater fear for Americans than death, even with the

pandemic, is speaking in public. And what makes it hard for us to share our faith is that like Moses, we don't feel we have what it takes to do it.

Yet, the Old Testament book of Numbers tells us something special about Moses. We may picture him like Charlton Heston in "The Ten Commandments" as this bold, charismatic leader, but Numbers tell us that Moses was the "humblest" man. Movies picture Moses speaking defiantly to the mighty Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. It didn't happen that way. In Exodus 3 when God called Moses, Moses gave the excuse that he couldn't speak clearly. God tells him that his brother Aaron could. So when Moses spoke to Pharaoh it was through the mouth of Aaron. Numbers tells us that when Aaron and his sister Miriam thought more highly of themselves than Moses, they developed leprosy. They were cured only because of Moses' intervention. Moses' very humility, which he thought would exclude him from leading the people of Israel, instead was used by God. Moses' humility made it clear that it was God's grace, not Moses' charisma, that was rescuing the people.

In fact we heard from former student Pastor Levi Willms last month that when Moses got angry with the people of Israel he said, "Why do you despise us (meaning God and him) when we sent water from the rock for you." In response to Moses saying "we," God forbids him from going into the promised land. It was a rare time when Moses forgot who was rescuing the people. And that was important, not because God has a great ego, but because only He can save us.

That is why God chooses to use you and me with all our faults and limitations to share His love with others. Through us it can become clear to others that it is God who is doing the blessing, not our charisma or talent. There are "mega-churches" in our culture that are led by people who have great charisma. But the experts who study why people go to churches have found that most of the people going to those churches are already Christian. Few are converts. Most conversions happen at mid-size churches where the key element is not the appearance on Sunday morning, but the sincere witness of friends who meet them one-on-one—friends like you and me.

Our epistle from Hebrews tells us that we "share in a heavenly calling." Does Hebrew go from there and say, "Now do all these great things." No, it says, "Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to His Father who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house." That is our starting and ending point as we hear God's call to share our faith. It is not about us and how great we are, or for that matter how weak and ineffective we are. It is about Jesus. That is why Paul said, "I can do all things through Jesus who strengthens me."

Despite what we might think, the prevailing attitude in our academic world is not that Christianity is crazy and should not be believed because it contradicts science. The prevailing standard is that all human beliefs should be considered. The objection is not to sharing Jesus per se, but saying that He is the only way. If we choose to follow Jesus, no one should ridicule us for that. It is when we say that our way as Christians is the only way that we are in trouble.

I am not saying that we have to stop saying that Jesus is the only way, but not use opposition to that view to keep us from telling others about Jesus. People don't want us to tell them what to believe, but Jesus isn't calling us to do that. Even if we were confident that we could do that, we can't. Only the Holy Spirit can give the faith to believe. Instead Jesus calls us to tell people what He means to us. It doesn't take any great speaking skills or persuasion power to do that. We just tell others about what we already have in Jesus. In fact our very hesitation to do that, to not want to be offensive to others, can be used by God to help our witness. When people see that we are sharing this as humble, gentle people, they are more likely to listen.

Moses was given what he needed to lead the people of Israel. And we are given what we need in our calling to share Jesus with others.

Creed: 2nd article of Creed, page 322

Prayer of the Church

P: "Lord in your mercy,"

C: "Hear our prayer."

ALL: O Lord, graciously receive our prayers and supplications which we bring before You with thanksgiving; and grant that we, whom You in grace have heard, may be genuinely thankful to You, praise Your holy Name, and ever increase in Your love and service through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sharing Our Ministry

The Confession

P: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.

C: If we walk in the light as God himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

P: God does not want us to perish, but to come to His life-giving light.

P: Almighty God,

C: You dwell in light unapproachable. Unprotected, we perish in Your presence. For our hearts are darkened, our minds beclouded; we call for night to cover our deeds; we have loved darkness rather than the light.

P: Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.

C: For His sake we beg forgiveness.

P: For His sake God hears your prayer. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

C: We have seen the Lord's glory; we have heard the Lord's voice.

P: The darkness of your sins is gone. Walk, then, as forgiven children of light in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

The Preface

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up unto the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God.

C: It is good and proper so to do.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Pastor)

Lord's Prayer

The Words of our Lord

P: When we eat this bread we share the body of Christ. When we drink from this cup we share the blood of Christ.

C: Reveal Yourself to us, O Lord, in the breaking of bread, as You once revealed Yourself on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Distribution of Holy Communion

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak" – Hymn #415

"Alleluia Sing to Jesus" – Hymn #821

Dismissal

Prayer after Communion

P: Almighty God, on the mountain You showed Your glory in the transfiguration of Your Son. Give us the vision to see beyond the turmoil of our world and to behold the King in all His glory; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing (pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Alleluia, Song of Gladness" – Hymn #417

(We sing this hymn to remind ourselves that we will not sing "Alleluia" again until Easter as we journey through Lent.)

Postlude