



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Epiphany 6 – February 11, 2018: The Cathedral's Transfiguration

The Transfiguration story. It takes place right in the heart of the Gospel of Mark, halfway between the baptism of Jesus and his resurrection, pointing us away from the comfort and familiarity of his ministry in Galilee and toward his passion on the cross in Jerusalem.

The Transfiguration is where the voice says to those on the mountaintop, "Listen to him!" even though we don't want to believe Jesus when he says that suffering and death are part of what it means for him to live into his call, probably because it says the same thing to us about our call—that it might cost us something, something of value, something we hold dear—family, friends, the familiar way of life where we're comfortable and content.

There are a lot of scholarly and theological definitions of transfiguration. But as I am wont to do, I've decided to come up with a definition of my own. And my operating definition of transfiguration this morning is: an event or experience where God does something to us or for us that brings us closer to the presence of God.

That's what happened atop Mount Tabor 2000 years ago. It was the signifier that God called Jesus to messianic salvation whereby he brought himself closer to God—and brought along all humanity with him. That's huge.

But then we have to scale it down to our own lives; our own lives back at this cathedral here in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

How are we transfigured? How are our lives transfigured?. How is our church transfigured?

I've got a good example, I think. Before I came on as Priest-in-Charge, I was the diocesan rep on the Cathedral Chapter and during our monthly meetings, I got the sense that we were in crisis and I kept saying to myself, "Thank God I'm going back to Hilo after this meeting." But Hilo was my Galilee, the place that was familiar, where I was comfortable and where I was content. And look at where I am now! I was transfigured.

The Cathedral was in crisis. The staff had all quit. Money seemed short. I remember how we would all just kind of sit there with stunned looks on our faces and wonder what we were going to do. And then slowly we began to figure things out and when we did, we were transfigured. We changed forever. We changed forever because we could no longer sit in the diagnosis of and complaints about our problems. God seemed to be telling us that it was time to come up with some solutions and a viable treatment plan because clearly God did not want us to continue doing what we were doing.

And so, we had to stop fretting and complaining and we had to start working together. We had to be stop being members of a church board and start being disciples of Jesus who were compelled to turn to prayer to come up with solutions that we couldn't seem to come up

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with by ourselves. We had to stop thinking of ourselves as volunteers and start thinking of ourselves as servants.

Most of all, we had to let go of our egos and become humble and empty, humble and empty to the point where God could enter our hearts to inspire us and help us out.

And that moment of relief was not only a moment of transfiguration for the Cathedral, it was also a moment of transfiguration for each of us as individuals, showing us yet again that the times of crisis in our lives are the times in our lives when we stand on holy ground, for we have nothing to do but turn to God for answers that we can't see for ourselves and we grow closer to God. That's transfiguration.

Our lives are full of moments of transfiguration – our births, our baptisms, the first time we fall love, our marriages, the births of our children, the births of our grandchildren, the deaths of our mothers and our fathers and then our brothers and our sisters and then our soulmates and partners in life, and then our own death. Our first communions. Our making peace with those we feel have wronged us. Or maybe something as simple as waking up at the dawn of each new day. The moments of transfiguration in our lives abound, and they are all blessings.

And the thing about transfiguration is that it seems to be between God and us. How many people at the time knew that that Moses and Elijah stood with Jesus atop Mount Tabor, except for a few of his disciples?. How many people out there really care or know about our personal moments of transfiguration?. And does it matter?. I don't think so.

And maybe that's because transfiguration isn't about the recognition of others and that's why Jesus tells his disciples to keep it a secret. Maybe the whole point is about being transfigured before God and God alone – whether it's being transfigured up on a mountain in the Holy Land, being baptized, getting married, having children, becoming grandparents, taking on a life in the church, or whatever it may be for you – it's about growing closer to God.

And the neat thing about it is that we don't have to go to the top of mountains in the Holy Land to be transfigured. We can be transfigured right here and right now at this morning's service – as we listen to the words of scripture, as we say the prayers, as we share the Peace, as we make manifest the body and blood of Christ in our midst, and as we go forth—out into the world as a people transfigured, a people who feel closer to the presence of God, and a people who share that with the world around us by transfiguring not only ourselves but the entire kingdom of God just by being the good people that God created us to be.

We are all transfigured. We are all blessed.

So, embrace your transfiguration. See it as God's grace. Bask in it. Feel the presence of God. And then take it out into the world; not to boast about it, but to proclaim it by simply being the beloved child of God that you are. And most of all, take in the words of God, the words of God that say, "Listen to him." Listen to him and be transfigured, listen to him and be transfigured for yourself, listen to him and be transfigured for the church, listen to him and be transfigured for the world, and listen to him and be transfigured for God. Be transfigured.

Amen.