

SERMON FOR TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY 3-3-19 Our Redeemer, Iowa City

Luke 9:30-31 “God works through people”

“And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, [31] who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Included in the calling of a Christian pastor is the privilege and obligation to help people. We have the privilege of bringing comfort to those who are sorrowing; of visiting the sick; of strengthening the weak, and in general, to give help to people. So a pastor does that. He visits the sick; he makes calls on the shut-ins; he reaches out with help whenever and wherever possible. The amazing thing is, however, that often when a pastor reaches out to help; he finds that he himself is the one being helped, as that shut-in or member in the hospital bears such witness to their faith that it lifts him up in his faith.

In the light of our text before us, perhaps this is not so strange. God helps people, sometimes by performing a miracle; yet far more often, God helps people simply through other people. At the Transfiguration, God helped even Jesus through other people, namely, through Moses and Elijah. And so also in our lives, God helps through people. Sometimes we have the privilege of being the ‘helper’; other times we are the ones being helped by others. Whatever the case, we realize that

GOD WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE!

The Transfiguration – it is a one-of-a-kind event in the earthly life of Jesus. Nothing else is quite like it. Why did it happen? What was God’s purpose behind it? From the point of view of the three disciples, God let them see the Transfiguration of Jesus to strengthen them for what lay ahead. The time was getting close when their beloved Master would be arrested, tried, beaten, and crucified. To enable Peter, James and John to get through that terrible ordeal, God lets them see Jesus for a little while in his true majesty as God.

(It is good for us to be here too! The location of the Transfiguration account in the Church Year; we too are strengthened by His mountain top experience for our walk with Jesus through Lent.)

But, for a few minutes this morning, let’s look at the Transfiguration from Jesus point of view. What was God wanting to accomplish for Jesus through this event? It is significant that the whole incident begins with Jesus praying. It is mentioned twice in the early verses of Luke’s account. Praying about what? My friends, REMEMBER GETHSEMANE! Almost surely Jesus was asking the heavenly Father for help. He knew that His suffering and dying were near. As a man, Jesus often went to His heavenly Father in prayer. So Jesus prays, no doubt, asking, “Father, help me!”

Normally God gives his help through other people. But sometimes other people let God down. So here. Earlier in this chapter Jesus had told his disciples, and not for the first time, about his impending death. The disciples though, are just no help to Jesus in this regard. It’s kind of like when a person is dying and knows he is dying, and tries to talk to his loved ones about it, but they keep telling him, No, you are going to be all right; don’t talk about dying!” They themselves just can’t face it. So they are of no help to that person in his/her dying hours.

But if one person doesn’t help, God often sends someone else. The ones whom God sends here to help Jesus are Moses and Elijah. We read: **“Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.”** And what were they talking about? **“They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”**

It is, of course, worthy of note, who these two men are. Through Moses God freed his people from bondage in Egypt; through Moses, God gave the Ten Commandments to His people. Elijah too was a mighty man of God who was God’s spokesman to the nation of Israel, the people of God. And Elijah went to heaven without first dying. These two God now sends to talk to Jesus **about his departure**, about his dying.

The specifics of what they say to Jesus we can only imagine. We can perhaps almost hear Moses saying, *“Jesus, there was nothing wrong with your Law; but there was something wrong with the people. They couldn’t make a go of it under the Law. It’s up to you now!”* And Elijah too, no doubt, had his own words of encouragement, *“Jesus, we’re leaving it up to you. We are sorry this means you will have to go to the cross for us. But we are glad you are willing to do it!”* And so, Jesus, as a man, is strengthened and encouraged to go on. Yes, God works through people to help people.

I don't know if you have ever thought about this, but the same thing is true with respect to our salvation. God, being God, could have worked out our salvation in some other way, without using a person to get it done. God could have, I suppose, somehow put forgiveness and salvation into the ground and then made us dig to get it. But no, God does things through people

So, to work out forgiveness for our sins and save us, God used a person, a flesh and blood human being. And there being no human being on earth capable of such a task, God has his own Son come down from heaven, walk the way to Calvary, and there offer Himself as the payment for our sins. Through Jesus Christ you and I have been brought into the Light of God's love; our sins have been taken away, paid for by Jesus! By faith in Him, we are children of God and heirs of heaven!

Thus far we have seen first that God used two specific people, Moses and Elijah, to strengthen Jesus. Second, God used a specific individual, his own Son, Jesus, to work out our salvation. Now... what does this mean for our lives as God's children and servants today?

Still today, God works through people.

- Think of a little baby. How does God care for a little baby? How does God feed it; clothe it, care for it, get it baptized? There is no question God COULD do these things by means of angels. But no, God's normal way is to work through people. God places that little baby into the hands of a father and mother, into a family.
- Also when someone gets sick, really sick, needs some type of major surgery, how does God handle that? Sometimes through a miracle. But more generally he uses doctors and nurses to do these things. God helps people through other people.

The same thing holds true, and even more so, in the spiritual realm, in the Church. Why has God brought you together as a family of believers here at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church? Certainly you are here to confess your faith and to grow in that faith through the Means of Grace. But is it not also true that God has placed you here that you might help each other and other people – to share the Gospel with them, to be an encouragement to them in their lives, to build each other up in your God-given faith? Isn't that what Paul meant when he said to the Christians in Galatia: (6:10) **“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”**

Certainly a person's faith is personal; it's a matter between you and the Lord; but at the same time faith in Christ is also a relational matter. Your faith relates you to other people of faith. God calls these other Christians your brothers and sisters in Christ. It is God's desire to give His help to these other people through you. So God puts passages in the Bible like:

- **“Bear each other's burdens...Weep with those who weep; rejoice with those who rejoice.”**
- **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just in Christ, God forgave you.”**
- It is God who says to each of us: **“Encourage one another and strengthen each other!”**

It doesn't always work. Peter and the others here fail Jesus in his time of need because they did not understand the full implications of the work of Christ. We, at times, may be less than helpful to someone needing our help. When that happens, don't give up! Place that sin too at the foot of the cross and ask God's help to help you help others! He will!

God works through people. Let His work through you! Don't block off God's help to you through others, but also, let God work through you. So, my friends, as we go forth into this new week, may we go with our eyes open to ways in which God is wanting to help someone through you. He will bless your efforts, to His praise and glory!

The Epiphany season begins and ends with Light: Wise Men: **“We have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.”** Today we see the brilliance and brightness and LIGHT of the glory of God in the person of Jesus transfigured before His disciples! We are privileged to live in that LIGHT every day. We know who Jesus is and what He has done. Now, may we, each day, be reflectors of that LIGHT out into a world of darkness that needs His LIGHT. Yes, **“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven!” Amen.**