

The Transfiguration of Our Lord February 11, 2018

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

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February 8, 2018 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134

Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.



<http://www.catholicmannight.com/the-transfiguration/the-trinity-at-the-transfiguration/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 413 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed

“O wonderful type! O vision fair”

“During the late 15th century, the Old Sarum Rite from Salisbury, England, supplied the church with new hymns. “O wondrous sight!,” one of the great historical hymns for the Feast of Transfiguration in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, was one of them. John Mason Neale, the prolific 19th-century translator of Greek and Latin hymns, was attributed with the translation.

UM Hymnal editor Carlton R. Young notes in his *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* (1993) that “Our text is incorrectly cited on the hymn page as John Mason Neale’s though it is stanzas 1 through 5 of the translation by the compilers of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1861, who used only two [of 20 total] of Neale’s lines...”

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-o-wondrous-sight-o-vision-fair>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-9glrG0ud0> First Plymouth Church, Lincoln Nebraska, February 7, 2916 UNL Singers and Congregation. Jeremy Bankson, Organist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaBHvBfm4a0> “ I was introduced to this hymn tune once I began playing for the Episcopal Church in 1998... The text truly brings to life the wonder of Jesus’ transfiguration and is perfect for the last Sunday of Epiphany.” [Sean Jackson - Christian Music](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vJBGxbDEEk> An arrangement to listen to, not sing along with. O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair - George Miles Organist: Steve Hohnstadt Organ: 1971 Miller at Calvary Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzWRJicLNXE> An arrangement by Paul Manz

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

The readings for Ash Wednesday, February 14, are:

Joel 2:12-19, Psalm 51:1-13, (14-19), 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21.

“...Elijah and Elisha are miracle-working prophets and their exploits will have no equal until the miracles of Jesus. Jewish readings see Elijah and Elisha as one of the pairs of great men who lead each generation from Moses and Aaron to the time of rabbinic period. Indeed, Moses is Elijah’s miracle-working forbear. Elijah demonstrates his connection to Moses by parting the waters of the Jordan as Moses did the Sea of Reeds, traditionally called the Red Sea. (Joshua, Moses’s successor in the tradition, did the same in Joshua 3:7-17; Caleb is regarded as his partner in leadership.) Some Christian readings see Jesus and John in that tradition with one of the proofs of Jesus’s divinity that he performs or exceeds all of Elijah’s miracles. Both of these traditions are likely at play in the gospel accounts of the transfiguration with which this text is linked thematically and in the lectionary, (see Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36)...”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3562 [Wil Gafney](#)
Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas

2 Kings 2:1-12 or Exodus 34:29-35; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), 2 Kings 2:1-12 (Next Week: Genesis 22:1-18; RCL, Genesis 9:8-17)

“The story of Elijah’s ascension to heaven in a whirlwind is paired in the lectionary with the Transfiguration of Jesus.

In the larger context of the New Testament passages, one can see the efforts of both the disciples and the Gospel writers to understand Jesus in light of the Old Testament (OT)...” (continued after the reading)

2 Kings 2:1-12 Elijah Taken to Heaven

2 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. ³ And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁴ Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.”

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” ¹⁰ And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” ¹¹ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

“...There are significant structural differences between 2 Kings 2 and the stories of the Transfiguration, however; most notably, Elijah departs from Elisha and his disciples, whereas Jesus returns to his. The Elijah story would be more naturally read in conjunction with Jesus’ Ascension (Acts 1), since it marks a similar transition of earthly leadership. Elisha asks “let me inherit a double share of your spirit” (v. 9), and indeed he picks up Elijah’s mantle and proves able to carry out the same miracle of dividing the waters. Jesus seems to expect his followers to be able to carry out the same wonders he did, if not greater ones (John 14:12)...)

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2361 **Christopher B. Hays**
D. Wilson Moore Associate Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.

Exodus 34:29-35 The Shining Face of Moses

“In the Protestant lectionary, Transfiguration Sunday stands at the juncture between Epiphany and Lent, and as such, offers a glimpse forward to the Easter Season and the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ.

Since the days of the early Christians, Jesus' transfiguration has been associated with Moses, who also stood before God, and the prophet Elijah. Why these two? One can guess, but a good possibility, as seen in a famous painting by Raphael, is as a representation of the traditions of the law and the prophets, with Jesus as the Gospel. These traditions are the bedrock of our faith and a good point of contemplation on the cusp of Lent...”

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.^[a] ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. ³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, ³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

a. [Exodus 34:29](#) Hebrew *him*

“...The focus text for today comes at the end of this chapter and tells that Moses' face was transformed after speaking with God. Again the people were afraid. Much of the commentary on this text centers on the understanding of the Hebrew word, *qaran*. Many, including Michelangelo, interpreted it to mean "horn," hence the famous statute of Moses with horns. In the Hebrew, "horn"

seems the most likely meaning, but other early translations use the word "shining." Whichever word is selected, the content of the change to Moses' countenance is not the point of the text. What is clear is that Moses' face has been transformed in a way that, just like the face-to-face encounter with God, made the Israelites afraid to come near.

This change is usually interpreted in light of Moses' interaction with God saying Moses' face is transformed because he was face-to-face with God on the mountain. This is certainly possible; a face-to-face encounter with God would change a person, and this change certainly would set Moses apart from, not only the people, but the leadership of Aaron, Miriam, and the elders. Moses has become unique...

...God changed God's own creation through Moses, as a visible sign of God's presence. Showing in deed a God who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" to a doubting and unfaithful people.

In a way, the transfiguration does the same. The disciples see Jesus as a Rabbi, leader, and even friend, and this prevents them from seeing Jesus as God, as the great king and ruler of the universe. Just like the doubting people in Exodus, the disciples catch a glimpse of the great God, live and in person. Also, like the people in the wilderness, the disciples do not understand and try to change the plan, the people are afraid to see God again, and Peter wishes to stay in this place and not go forward into the next 40 days. Each does not fully comprehend what God is showing them. Each shows the frailty and fear of humanity, while God demonstrates God's character of love and faithfulness and patience with humanity."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=513 **Beth L. Tanner** *Professor of Old Testament, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ*

Psalm 50:1-6; RCL, the same reading (*Psalm 25:1-10; RCL, the same reading*)

“EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

...The exordium or beginning of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker GOD, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented to us with any human resemblance; nor do I imagine that earth will ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them. Barton Bouchier.50 ...” (continued after the reading)

God Himself Is Judge A Psalm of Asaph.

The Mighty One, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.

² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

³ Our God comes; he does not keep silence;^[a]
before him is a devouring fire,

around him a mighty tempest.
⁴ He calls to the heavens above
 and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
⁵ “Gather to me my faithful ones,
 who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”
⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness,
 for God himself is judge! **Selah**

(Continues through verse 23)

- a. [Psalm 50:3](#) Or *May our God come, and not keep silence*

“... A Psalm of Asaph. This is the first of the Psalms of Asaph, but whether the production of that eminent musician, or merely dedicated to him, we cannot tell. The titles of twelve Psalms bear his name, but it could not in all of them be meant to ascribe their authorship to him, for several of these Psalms are of too late a date to have been composed by the same writer as the others. There was an Asaph in David's time, who was one of David's chief musicians, and his family appear to have continued long after in their hereditary office of temple musicians. An Asaph is mentioned as a recorder or secretary in the days of Hezekiah 2Ki 18:18, and another was keeper of the royal forests under Artaxerxes. That Asaph did most certainly write some of the Psalms is clear from 2Ch 29:30, where it is recorded that the Levites were commanded to "sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, "but that other Asaphic Psalms were not of his composition, but were only committed to his care as a musician, is equally certain from 1Ch 16:7, where David is said to have delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord...”
<http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/treasury/ps050.htm> Charles Spurgeon

2 Corinthians 3:12-13 (14-18), 4:1-6; RCL, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (James 1:12-18; RCL, 1 Peter 3:18-22

“What is Paul up to in 2 Corinthians 3, one of the most challenging portions of all his letters?...” *You might want to read his approach for one way to understand this lesson.*
https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2758 **David E. Fredrickson** Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ *But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.* ¹⁵ *Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.* ¹⁶ *But when one^[a] turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.* ¹⁷ *Now the Lord^[b] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* ¹⁸ *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[c] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[d] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

- a. [2 Corinthians 3:16](#) Greek *he*
- b. [2 Corinthians 3:17](#) Or *this Lord*
- c. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) Or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*
- d. [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) Greek *from glory to glory*

“Every second reading for Transfiguration from 2 Corinthians comes after the next.

Confusing? In an interesting coincidence, the lectionary for Transfiguration in Year B (February 22, 2009) and Year C (February 14, 2010), takes successive reading from 2 Corinthians, but in reverse order. Last Transfiguration, the reading was 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, and for this year it is 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:1. At first, this may not seem like something worth noting, but the connection between the two texts and the significance of reading them on Transfiguration are interesting.

In 2 Corinthians 3:13-18, the word "veil" (*kalumma*) occurs four times, in each of the verses except seventeen. There is the veil that Moses wore over his face after his visage had been transformed by his encounter with God. After speaking to God in the tent of meeting, Moses would put on his veil to avoid making the Israelites uncomfortable; it seems that when they saw his face shining with the glory of his encounter with God they were afraid (Exodus 34:29-35), and, as their own faces were still shining from the exertion of reveling before the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), they were probably ashamed by the comparison as well...”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=525 [Karl Jacobson](#)
Associate Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis, Minn.

The Light of the Gospel

“Today’s reading, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (RCL), gives us profound insight into how we are transfigured by a double manifestation -- of the Messiah’s glory as the image of God and of God’s glory in the face of Jesus the Messiah.

*Our clue for interpreting this text is found in the preceding verses. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul speaks about how -- through the Spirit of the Lord -- all of us, with “unveiled faces,” can “behold” and “reflect” the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. (The Greek *kataprizomai* can mean both “to behold” and “to reflect.”) As this happens, we are “transformed” into that image, from one degree of glory to another.*

The divine mercy we experience through this mirroring gives us courage. We can renounce the shame we would rather hide. We can refuse to appropriate God’s word in ways that disguise our self-interest at the expense of others. And we can boldly manifest the truth of who we are -- through the gospel that shines through us -- to everyone we encounter, wherever we might be (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3569 [Lois Malcolm](#)
Professor of Systematic Theology, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,^[a] we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice^[b] cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of

the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^[c] for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light 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.

- a. [2 Corinthians 4:1](#) Greek *having this ministry as we have received mercy*
- b. [2 Corinthians 4:2](#) Greek *to walk in*
- c. [2 Corinthians 4:5](#) Or *slaves* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)

"Third in a series of lectionary texts which at first blush appear to consist of insider-trading for homileticians, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 wrestles, in what is just small part, with what is a huge issue for the church:

What do we make of those who have heard the gospel, and yet do not believe? This one issue is enough for any text, be it little or big, but there is more here as well which flows out of this question.

In the *Small Catechism*, Martin Luther says that it is the Spirit which quickens the heart to faith. "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith" (Luther's explanation to the Third Article). As I read Philippians 2:13, Paul would agree. This raises the question, what about those who do not believe? Are they without the Spirit? Are they left to muddle through on their own, spiritless, punchless or faithless? Or worse, do they suffer the fate of Saul, being afflicted by an evil spirit?...

Everything that is at stake in this little passage - veils and "gods" of this world and the problem of those who do not believe - points to our big calling to proclaim the glory of Christ, to speak light into darkness and proclaim the knowledge of the glory of God that we have seen in the face of Jesus Christ. As Paul writes at the end of the third chapter of 2 Corinthians, the passage that most directly precedes this one: "But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:16-18)."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=241 [Karl Jacobson](#)
Associate Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis, Minn.

THE MARK CHALLENGE – Of course you started Chapter Four.

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th Chapter”

Mark 9:2-9; RCL the same reading (*Mark 1:9-15; RCL, the same reading*)

“Transfiguration is one of those "non-holidays" that appears in lectionaries with its own particular set of readings, but doesn't draw much attention from local congregations.

The Transfiguration has many of the elements of the story of a superhero. There's an arduous trek up a mountain; a tightly knit company of friends on a "mission" together; the appearance of other-worldly figures in dazzling light; the transformation of the hero into an equally dazzling figure;

a command from a powerful voice from another dimension; a determined descent to battle those other powers back home. Preachers don't quite know what to do with it. After all, Jesus is not exactly a superhero...is he?

Well, "no." And "yes." ...”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1202 [Sarah Henrich](#)
Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

The Transfiguration

² And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one^[a] on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,^[b] it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son;^[c] listen to him.” ⁸ And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

- a. [Mark 9:3](#) Greek *launderer* (*gnapheus*)
- b. [Mark 9:5](#) *Rabbi* means *my teacher*, or *my master*
- c. [Mark 9:7](#) Or *my Son*, *my* (or *the*) *Beloved*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

“Probably the greatest challenge about preaching on Transfiguration Sunday is dealing with the pressure to explain what the Transfiguration means.

Somehow we expect that we have to guide people toward making sense of why the Transfiguration occurred, or how the story functions within the plots of the Synoptic Gospels, or why the Synoptic evangelists thought they should include it, or what shaped the early Christian traditions about the Transfiguration, or what symbolic value should be assigned to the setting and Jesus’ two conversation partners, or what the event communicates about Jesus’ nature, or whether we should praise or criticize Peter’s comments, or why some people call it “Transfiguration Sunday” while others prefer the more melodious “Quinquagesima.”

Seriously? When has the idea of a brilliantly glowing holy figure ever “made sense,” anyway?

The transfigured Jesus isn’t supposed to be figured out. He’s supposed to be appreciated. We should be drawn to him, as if we were moths. On this day, help your congregation bask in the warm wonder of his glow. Here are three angles into the text that might serve your efforts...

A Jesus who will be seen Epiphany began a few weeks ago with a story about a manifestation of Jesus’ identity, but it was a much more covert incident: Jesus’ baptism. In Mark’s

account of the baptism, it's not clear that anyone else sees the heavens slashed apart or the Holy Spirit diving into Jesus. The voice from heaven is Jesus' alone to hear. Nothing's public. Nothing's obvious. Similarly, most of the epiphanies we get to experience in life consist of glimpses, and sometimes we aren't even sure that they are really ours to see.

The Transfiguration is a very different kind of a revealing, however. Jesus becomes a beacon, like a lighthouse planted in the middle of the desert. The heavenly voice addresses all the witnesses: Peter, James, and John. On this Sunday, there is a promise that Jesus can and will be noticed. Epiphanies aren't always subtle...

Epiphany is for lovers Because the Transfiguration is so bizarre and unusual, it can be easy to assume that we're supposed to approach it with sober reverence and awe. But that isn't how God views it. For God, the Transfiguration presents an opportunity to declare love for the one called "Son."

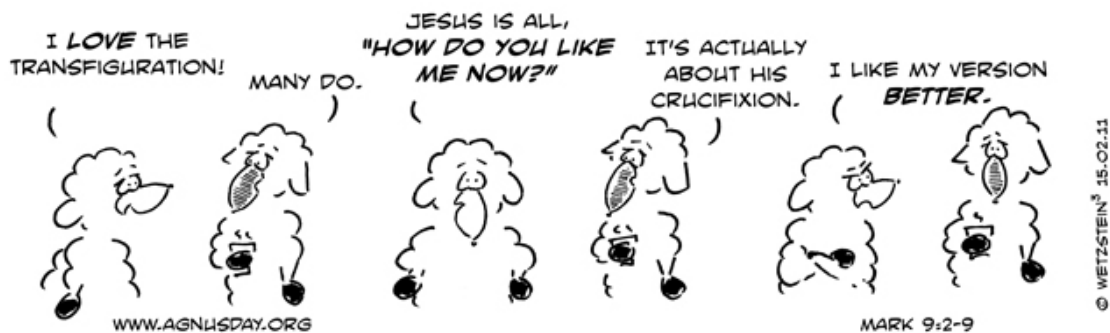
If God is capable of smiling, this would be the occasion in which that happens. I don't see how anyone can talk of one's "beloved" without breaking into a pleased grin. That's how lovers talk to and about each other...

The promise of intimacy with God...The sights and sounds of the Transfiguration also suggest that Peter, James, and John find themselves on holy ground, in privileged company. After all, Jesus appears alongside Moses and Elijah, the two greatest prophets in Jewish memories...

The bright light of the Transfiguration affirms life, a light that shines ahead into Lent to keep that season in perspective, never without hope and confidence. This light speaks a promise that God is here. And that God is knowable. God seeks relationship. Because God is life."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2341 **Matt Skinner**

Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.



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THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18

If you've started, has it "changed" you?