

February 27, 2022  
The Transfiguration of our Lord  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
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Luke 9:28-36

## FROM SUFFERING TO GLORY.

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

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 9th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Mankind has a sin problem. You and I have a sin problem. But I guess you already know that or else you'd be out at the restaurant right now enjoying brunch with friends instead of coming to the Divine Service. When Adam ate the fruit in the Garden of Eden, sin entered the world and spread to all people. The whole world, with every man, woman, and child was cursed to suffer thorns and thistles, decay and bondage, pain and distress. Suffering comes for everyone. Death comes for everyone. (cf: Genesis 3:16–19)

Suffering and death are the greatest challenges to the Christian faith and have been since the fall. Call it theodicy or the problem with evil, if God is loving and holy and good, then how do evil and misery exist in the world? When a tragedy occurs, people often ask: "*Where was this merciful God when my loved one was suffering.*" The short answer is: "*Our merciful and loving God was suffering on the cross to save all mankind from their sin.*" But that needs a longer explanation.

It is true that sometimes your suffering is self-inflicted due to the poor decisions that you have made in thought, word, or deed. Other times it the devil assaulting you so that you might fall from faith. But at other times, your suffering may be a trial permitted by God for your good or for the good of another. Most importantly, suffering is part of God's redemptive plan for the salvation of all mankind.

Today, as we do every year, on the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany, we remember the Transfiguration of Our Lord. For the past seven weeks we've heard many instances of Jesus made manifest as God in the flesh of man. How appropriate then today, as Jesus is about to set His face toward Jerusalem where He will suffer and die to save mankind from their sin, we hear how the glory of God is revealed in Christ Jesus and visibly manifest to Peter, James, and John. And, not only to those three disciples but also made visible to eyes of faith to all who hear our Gospel text.

As we consider the transfiguration, it's really easy to focus on the glory of Christ Jesus alone. But, to get the whole picture of Christ's glory, our text gives us a foreshadowing of something

less bright and shiny. The Mount of Transfiguration also foreshadows Jesus' suffering on Mount Calvary. As God always does, He turns the wisdom of man on its head. To see the full glory of Christ we must first see His full suffering and death on the cross. Suffering always must precede glory.

St Luke writes:

***“Now about eight days after these sayings...”*** (Luke 9:28)

You might be asking: *“What sayings are those?”* Well, in the verses immediately prior to our text, Jesus told His disciples:

***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”*** <sup>23</sup> ... ***“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*** <sup>24</sup> ***For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”*** (Luke 9:22–24)

So Luke says it was *about eight days* after *these sayings* that Jesus:

***“... took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.”*** (Luke 9:28)

In Matthew and Mark's parallel Gospel accounts, they record that it was precisely six days chronologically. (cf: Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2) But Luke says it was *about* eight. Commentators suggest that in his approximation of eight days, Luke is foreshadowing of the connection between Jesus' transfiguration and His suffering, death, and resurrection on the *eighth day* of the week. (cf: Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, 526; Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50, Concordia Commentary*, 399) By Jewish reckoning of days, Christ died on the sixth day of the week, rested in the tomb on the Sabbath, and rose from the dead on the eighth day.

Suffering always precedes glory. But the natural man wants nothing to do with suffering. Your old Adam desires glory. But God uses the foolish to shame the wise. The scandal of the cross, and the stumbling block of suffering is an affliction with which we all must wrestle. (cf: 1 Corinthians 1:21–23) Jesus' disciples were no different. When Jesus told them He must suffer and die, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. (cf: Matthew 16:22) Peter wouldn't have Jesus, the Son of the living God, face the scandal of the cross and the stumbling block of suffering. Peter wouldn't have a crucified Christ. But there is order in the Kingdom of God: suffering is first, and then is glory. To have a Christ, a Savior of the world, God must be crucified. Suffering must precede glory. To have a disciple of Christ, suffering must be experienced. Glory is a promise. Suffering you have now. Glory will come on the Last Day. Suffering is on account of sin, yours, mine, and all mankind's. Glory is on account of:

***“... Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:23)

It's easy to see the glory in the transfiguration because the glorious Christ is revealed. But many miss the glory in Jesus' Passion on the cross because it is filled with weakness, suffering, and death. At His transfiguration, Jesus' divine glory that has been hidden since His conception by the Holy Spirit, now fully shines through His human flesh. His face is transformed and His clothing becomes dazzling white, for mere clothing cannot contain the glory of God. (cf: Luke 9:29)

At the same time, the transfiguration foreshadows a suffering Christ. Moses and Elijah representing the Law and the Prophets, the entire Old Testament with its testimony to the passion and resurrection of Jesus, appear in glory, talking with Jesus about His coming departure. (cf: Luke 9:30–31) In the original language they are talking of Jesus' *exodus* (BDAG, 351) in which He would accomplish on Calvary's cross, the Lamb of God lead to slaughter as sacrifice for the sins of the world. They fulfill the Law's requirement of the evidence of two or three witnesses.

The transfiguration foreshadows also the fulfilment of Christ's glory in His resurrection and ascension. As Peter is intellectually unavailable and babbling about making tents for the three men, suddenly a cloud overshadows them and the Father testifies to Jesus' true identity. The affirmation that He spoke from heaven at Jesus' Baptism, He reaffirmed at the transfiguration as the Father proclaims:

***"This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"*** (Luke 9:35; cf: Luke 3:21–22)

You and I and all mankind would do well to listen to Jesus for He is God's own Son, His chosen One appointed from before the creation of the world to be mediator between God and man, reconciling mankind with the Father. In His innocent suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus would gloriously lead all mankind out of the bondage of thorns and thistles, pain and distress, suffering and sin. Even out of the bondage of death. Suffering must always precede glory.

You were united to that glory in your Baptism. At the font God clothed you with the robe of Christ's righteousness that covers all your sin and put upon you the *new self*, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (cf: Ephesians 4:24) Today by faith you grasp and cling to that glory that is to be revealed on the Last Day. St Peter writes:

***"... when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."*** (1 Peter 5:4)

But until that Day arrives, our Lord bids you to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him. (cf: Luke 9:22) A servant is not greater than His master. (cf: John 15:20) To be a disciple of Christ, suffering must be experienced. Glory is a promise. Suffering you have now. Glory will come on the Last Day.

The Mount of Transfiguration reveals the glory of Christ but it also foreshadows His suffering on Mount Calvary. As God always does, He turns the wisdom of man on its head. To see the full glory of Christ we must first see His suffering and death on the cross. American Christianity teaches a theology of glory, that discipleship is working toward being a better Christian and being rewarded with material success. It teaches that God helps those who help themselves. But Holy Scripture teaches the theology of the cross, that discipleship is a life of denying one's self and bearing one's own cross for the sake of Jesus, joining in His suffering.

Man can neither come to God nor make a commitment to Him. Christ Jesus, on the other hand, came for you and committed His life to you on Calvary's cross. And the crosses you now bear define the Christian life. Crosses are what you endure for the sake of the Gospel. And the glory and love of God shine through you into the unbelieving world as you faithfully bear your cross, suffering the effects of being born into a sinful body in a sinful world. St Paul puts it this way:

***“... we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7)***

The natural man wants nothing to do with suffering. But God uses the foolish to shame the wise. There is order in the Kingdom of God: suffering is first, and then is glory. Glory is a promise. Suffering you have now. Glory will come on the Last Day. So you, fellow redeemed clay jars in Christ, take that treasure, the Good News of Christ and Him crucified and proclaim it to your suffering neighbor so that they, too, might know the joy of your salvation, the Suffering Servant (cf: Isaiah 52:13–53:12) whom is risen and ascended into glory, whom all who believe will one day, beholding the glory of the Lord with our own eyes, seeing him face to face and bear the image of His glory. (cf: 1 Corinthians 13:12, 15:49 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.