

ST PETER'S ANGLICAN CHURCH WINNIPEG.

DATE: 27 FEBRUARY 2022.

READINGS: EXODUS 34:29-end, LUKE 9:28-36.

SERMON BY THE REVEREND. MICKTON PHIRI.

INTRODUCTION.

Both today's Old Testament, and Gospel readings record important scenes in the history of salvation. The Exodus reading, we heard this morning records the transformation of Moses' face after an encounter with God for forty days and forty nights on the mountain. On the other hand, today's Gospel reading from Luke records the significant glorious scene of Jesus' transfiguration. Today is also the last Sunday before Lent which will be ushered in by Ash Wednesday. In this regard, my preaching today will focus on how the transfiguration of Jesus helps us in preparing for the Lenten season before us.

TRANSFIGURATION.

The general understanding of the word transfiguration refers to a change of form or appearance to a more beautiful and in most cases spiritual state. In the New Testament, the Transfiguration of Jesus is an event where Jesus is transformed and becomes radiant in glory upon a mountain. In this regard, transfiguration is transformation. This biblical narrative is mentioned in each of the Gospel books as a key moment in Jesus' life and indication of his divinity. After completing several miracles and foretelling His own death, Jesus leads just three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, to a "high mountain" where his appearance was radiantly transformed.

Jesus invites Peter, James, and John to a distant location where He prays. He requested the disciples to pray, though they slept off. When they wake up, they see Jesus standing before them, surrounded by an indescribable manifestation of light and splendour. This miracle is unique among others that appear in the canonical Gospels, in that the miracle happens to Jesus himself. Unlike the many recorded miracles that Jesus performed on other people. The Transfiguration is a significant moment, and the location on the mountain is depicted as the meeting point for human nature and God: the meeting spot for the temporal and eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, functioning as a bridge between heaven and earth.

Peter, James, and John are sole witnesses of the glorious moment of Jesus. This is the same glory Moses asked for from God in the preceding chapter of the Old Testament reading we heard this morning. What a privilege it was for the three disciples to be witnesses of such a glorious moment in the life of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. Today we are the witnesses of Christ in our time. This reminds me of John the Baptist's disciples when they went to enquire on whether Jesus was the Messiah who was to come. Jesus says to them, go and tell John what you have seen. My dear

Brothers and Sisters, we are here reminded and encouraged by Jesus' transfiguration that our lives must be witnesses of the glory and works of our Lord Jesus. Our life experiences with Jesus should be witness of the faith that we proclaim. We may not have the same experiences with God, but we ought to have an experience of God's grace in each of our lives. May then the words of Moses in **Exodus 33:18** be our prayer as we remember Christ's transfiguration. He pleads, "**I beseech thee, show me thy glory O Lord**". May it be our prayer today that we may also be witnesses of God's glory in our lives.

Like the transfiguration of Jesus Christ on the mountain, the Lenten season is transformative and full of God's grace. We are reminded today by the transfiguration of Jesus of the glory that the Lenten season holds for us. Like the transfiguration event, lent is a season of **separation** (fasting, repentance), and **prayer** (reflection, listening). As the transfiguration was an intimate moment with God, lent is a season equally the same.

SEPERATION.

Reaching a critical and anxious moment, Jesus like Moses in the first Exodus reading went to a mountain to pray. He separated himself, with three of his disciples. Peter, James, and John partners in the secular business before, now sole witnesses of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration today, and later the agony in the garden. By separating Himself and a few disciples from the rest, Jesus moved to an environment that allows the glory of God to manifest. Jesus and the trio moved away from the busy schedules and noises of their time to focus on God. The first reading brings us closer to the context of lent, as Moses' encounter with God was characterised by prayers of repentance on behalf of the Israelite community which had abandoned God's law. Lent becomes a season of repentance, and separation from sinful habits and acts. One of the main pillars of lent is fasting. Through fasting we separate ourselves from certain things as call for individual spiritual enrichment for a more focused and intimate time with God. The transfiguration of Jesus is characterised by a key character of separation.

The world has become so busy that at times we barely find time for God. The many events of life sometimes destruct us from setting aside time for God, to see His glory and to hear His voice. As we prepare ourselves for Lent, the transfiguration of Jesus reminds us of the need as believers to dedicate our time to God. Jesus and the disciples had an intimate time with God without interruption and they saw his Glory and heard his voice. We are reminded my dear Brothers and Sisters that there is need sometimes to intentionally move away from our busy schedules and life events and focus on God without any destrutions but solely focusing on God.

PRAYER.

Prayer is the means through which we communicate with God. It is a two-way interaction that involves both **listening and speaking**. Both the Old Testament and Gospel reading from this morning share the key aspect of prayer. Moses prayed to God, while Jesus took three of His disciples to pray. Prayer was the unlocking key of the transfiguration miracle. The shining glory was designed for Jesus, but he sought it through prayer. At transfiguration, the shining glory came down while at a time of prayer. Prayer unlocks the promises of God to us. This Lenten season we have many things to pray for. The COVID pandemic, and a threat to world peace through events taking place in Ukraine are a call for prayers for healing and peace.

However, prayer does not only intel speaking to God, asking and praising Him through the words of our lips only but also involves a key aspect of **listening** to the voice of God. In the Gospel from Luke, Jesus spoke to God, in Exodus, Moses also spoke to God, but they all had time to listen to God's voice. Moses was instructed on the commandments of God through listening to the voice of God. At transfiguration, Jesus' identity was confirmed before the Peter, James and John while they listened to God's voice. Lent is such a time to listen to the voice of God. It is a season set aside for us to meditate upon the word of God and allow God to speak into our lives. Lent is a season to give the ears of our inner hearts to God for his word is food to our souls. Many times, we have told God what we want in our lives, but have we given him enough room to speak into our lives? At transfiguration, Jesus and His disciples had time to listen to the voice of God. The transfiguration of Jesus, therefore, comes to us today as a reminder before lent of the importance of listening to the voice of God in our lives. Brothers and Sisters, prayer is transfiguring and transformative. We are here reminded of the power of speaking and listening to God in our lives. Our attention is called for therefore, through the transfiguration of Jesus and in preparation of lent to the reminder of the transforming power of prayer.

As we move towards lent in this coming week, may the transfiguration of Jesus be a reminder to all of us of the glory of God that we can all be witnesses of in one way or the other in our lives. That same glory that shone on the face of Moses before the Israelites and on the self of Jesus before His disciples. May the transfiguration of Jesus also remind us of the key processes necessary to unlock the glory of God in our lives. **I pray that our faithful God grant unto us the ability and courage to Separate ourselves from destructions. The desire and strength to speak and listen to Him that we may see His glory. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Sermon by The Reverend Mickton Phiri. (27 February 2022, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)