

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Our Transfigurations.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 9:31**. I know your Bibles are open to **2 Cor 3**. Please mark this spot and turn to **Luke 9**. We'll turn back to it later in the sermon.

We're in Luke's account of the Transfiguration. We're at **verse 31**, but please back up to **verse 28** for context...

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 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.

I've already told you that the Transfiguration is a very unique account in Scripture. It's the one time during Jesus' earthly ministry that He's revealed in His glorified body. But that's not the only reason this account is so unique. It's also unique b/c it reveals two people in their glorified bodies.

If you think about Scripture – from Genesis to Revelation – when do we get to see people...after death?

- Saul went to the medium, and Samuel was brought up from the dead.
- The account of the Rich Man and Lazarus – which I've told you before I believe discusses real people, and is not a parable – reveals a few people after they died.
- Rev 6 prophesies of the saints under the altar who are martyred during the Tribulation

And that seems to be about it!

But in this account we get to see Moses and Elijah who left this life, and it says they **appeared in glory**. They're in their glorified bodies!

If you have NIV, it doesn't make mention of Moses and Elijah being glorified, but most other translations do:

- NKJV **who appeared in glory**
- NASB **appearing in glory**
- HCSB **They appeared in glory**

So Jesus is transfigured, but these two are transfigured too!

Remember this isn't just a picture of Jesus' Transfiguration. This is actually a window – or glimpse – into the Millennial Kingdom. In **verse 27** Jesus said, "**But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until THEY SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**" And guess how we – or Church Age believers – look in the Millennial Kingdom? Glorified!

And this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS, MOSES, AND ELIJAH'S GLORIFIED BODIES ARE PICTURES OF OUR GLORIFIED BODIES.

You might remember that I told you Moses and Elijah represent all individuals in their glorified bodies:

- Moses represents believers who die and are buried.
- Elijah represents believers who do not die, but are raptured and taken to heaven

In **verse 30** look at the words **And behold, two men were talking with him**. So one thing to notice is even when we're glorified:

- If you're a man you remain a man.
- If you're a woman, you remain a woman.

We're not going to be some kind of androgynous, floating spirits.

Listen to these two verses from **Rom 6** that make the point that Jesus' glorified body reveals what awaits us...

Rom 6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection LIKE HIS.

The idea is:

- Jesus' death is our death...
- Jesus' burial is our burial...
- Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection...

And for this morning's sermon, His glorified body is a picture of our glorified bodies!

Listen to these two verses saying the same thing...

Phil 3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 WHO WILL TRANSFORM OUR LOWLY BODY TO BE LIKE HIS GLORIOUS BODY, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

We'll receive glorified bodies, and they'll be like Christ's glorified body.

I want to share some other verses with you, but I'd like you to see them for yourselves. Please turn to **1 Cor 15:50**...

1 Cor 15:50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

We can't enter the kingdom of God in our flesh and blood bodies – or our earthly bodies – so we need new bodies. Look at **verse 51**...

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (this is referring to the Rapture). **For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and WE SHALL BE CHANGED.**

This isn't referring to a spiritual change. This is referring to a physical change to our bodies.

When Job was suffering and he looked like his earthly body was about to fall apart, listen to what he said to encourage himself...

Job 19:26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet IN MY FLESH I SHALL SEE GOD.

Job said, “**after my skin has been destroyed.**”

- He meant after he's dead and his skin has decayed or rotted away as it's translated in some Bibles.
- He's saying after he's been dead for some period of time THEN he would see God.

And he said this would happen **in his flesh.**

- He didn't expect this to happen as a ghost or a spirit. He expected to have new flesh, or a new body.
- So even the oldest book in Scripture prophesied of us receiving glorified bodies!

You can hear all this and think, “Wow, this is wonderful! I can't wait until the day comes that I receive my glorified body!”

Well, Scripture teaches something pretty amazing...we can actually start receiving glory now!

Turn to the right a few chapters to **2 Cor 3**. Here's the context for these verses:

- Paul is contrasting the Old and New Covenants.
- Specifically he's contrasting the glory found under the Old Covenant with the **GREATER** glory found under the New Covenant.

We'll start at **verse 7**...

7 Now if the ministry of death (this is referring to the Old Covenant, b/c the Law brought death in the sense that it revealed how sinful we are), **carved in letters on stone** (the Ten Commandments were carved on stone tablets), **came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory,**

Pause right here so I can give you the background...

Moses was on Sinai for 40 days with God. God gave him the law and when he came down from the mountain his face was shining...

Exo 34:29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai [he] did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God...32 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.

Moses' face was so bright they had to put a veil over it b/c nobody could look at it.

Now look at the rest of **verse 7**...

7b which was being brought to an end

This is referring to the glory of Moses' face coming to an end, and since that glory is associated with the Old Covenant, it's also saying the glory of the Old Covenant is coming to an end.

Now look at **verse 8**...

8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

This is referring to the New Covenant, b/c under the New Covenant the Holy Spirit would indwell people...and for that reason the New Covenant has **more glory**.

9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation (again referring to the Old Covenant, b/c the Law condemns us), **the ministry of righteousness** (the New Covenant, b/c it allows us to be righteous by faith) **must far exceed it in glory** (the glory of the New Covenant far exceeds the glory of the Old Covenant). **10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory** (the Old Covenant) **has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it** (the glory of the New Covenant, **surpasses** the glory of the Old Covenant). **11 For if what was being brought to an end** (the Old Covenant) **came with glory, much more will what is permanent** (the New Covenant) **have glory.**

Anyone notice a word Paul kept repeating?

- The word **glory** occurs **TEN TIMES** in these three verses!
- Paul is contrasting the glory of the Old Covenant with the much greater glory of the New Covenant.

We don't have the time to read verses 12 through 17. Skip to **verse 18** to see a few specific ways the glory of the new Covenant is much greater than the glory of the Old Covenant...

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (or some Bibles say from glory to glory). **For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

Now let me make the connection to the previous verses perfectly clear...

- I've told you a number of times before that the OT prefigures or foreshadows the NT...
- If you only read Exodus - and didn't have the NT - you'd have to look at what happened w/ Moses and say, "Wow, this is WEIRD! What is going on?"
- Then you read these verses in the NT and it's perfectly clear: the glory Moses experienced under the Old Covenant prefigured or foreshadowed the glory we experience under the New Covenant.

But here's something really important...

- I've also told you that the type or shadow always fall short of the reality or substance...
- What happened with Moses pales in comparison to what happens with us...
- If Moses could've received the glory under the Old Covenant that we receive under the New Covenant, than there would've been no reason for a New Covenant!

So the question is: "How is the glory we receive under the New Covenant greater than the glory Moses received under the Old Covenant?"

I'm glad you asked! Let me show you...

Notice Paul starts **verse 18** with the words **And we all**.

- Under the Old Covenant, who experienced the glory Moses experienced? Just Moses!
- With the words **we all**, Paul reveals this is a glory that all believers experience under the New Covenant.

Second, notice Paul says **with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord**.

Under the Old Covenant, who could approach God on Sinai and have fellowship with Him? Only Moses! Under the New Covenant who can approach God and have fellowship with Him? All of us who are believers:

- **Heb 4:16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
- **Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.** Through Jesus we can enter the very Holy of Holies...and we don't have to climb Mount Sinai to do it!

Third, notice Paul says **[we] are being transformed** as opposed to **we WILL BE** transformed. And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: OUR TRANSFIGURATIONS BEGAN WHEN WE BECAME CHRISTIANS.

2 Cor 3:18 presents a truth that's so wonderful we should be mindful of it every day. The truth is this:

- We can share in the image of Christ and go from glory to glory...IN THIS LIFE!
- We don't even have to wait until this life is over to start being transformed.

During Jesus' High Priestly prayer He prayed that God the Father would give Him the glory that He used to have, but listen to what Jesus says He'll do with that glory...

John 17:22 The glory that you have given me I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM, that they may be one even as we are one.

Jesus laid aside His glory when He came to earth. He received it back at the Ascension, and He will share that glory with us when we're given glorified bodies. But you notice He said **I have given [it] to them**, b/c He's referring to our transfigurations beginning at the moment of conversion.

Paul said something similar...

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified HE ALSO GLORIFIED.

Notice it's present tense. It's referring to the transformation that begins in our lives the moment we become Christians.

Also, Paul said **conformed to the image of His Son**:

- So in **2 Cor 3:18** Paul said **being transformed INTO THE SAME IMAGE**, he meant the image of Christ.
- We are continually being transformed into **the image of Christ**.

Now to make this connection to the Transfiguration even clearer, the Greek word for **transformed** in **2 Cor 3:18** is *metamorphoo* (pr: met-ah-mar-fah-oh), and it only occurs four times in Scripture:

- It occurs right here in **2 Cor 3:18**.
- It occurs in **Rom 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed** (*metamorphoo* - pr: met-ah-mar-fah-oh), **by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God**. This is another transformation – or transfiguration – that takes place in our lives, and that's the transformation of our minds.
- It occurs twice in the Gospels, in **Matthew 17** and **Mark 9** when they say Jesus was transfigured. Luke doesn't use the word, b/c he says Jesus was **altered**, instead of Transfigured.

Metamorphoo (pr: met-ah-mar-fah-oh) is related to our word, "metamorphosis."

A metamorphosis is a change on the outside that comes from the inside. For example:

- When a caterpillar builds a cocoon and later emerges as a butterfly, it's due to the process of metamorphosis. The change is inward.
- It is the opposite of the word *masquerade*, which is an outward change that does not come from – or does not match – the inward.

And this reveals another way that our glory is greater than the glory Moses experienced:

- Moses reflected the glory of the Lord, but we radiate the glory of the Lord.
- With Moses there was no inward change. It was all external.
- Our change is inward. Our hearts change and that manifests itself outwardly.

Fourth, look at the words **from one degree of glory to another** or some Bibles say **from glory to glory**.

What happened to the glory Moses experienced? It faded!

This shows another way that what happens with us is greater than what happened with Moses:

- Not only does the glory we experience NOT fade, it gradually increases.
- There's a continual, progressive transformation that's taking place with us even now.

The theological name for this is sanctification:

- It's the process by which we are slowly transformed – or transfigured – into the image of Christ.
- I was thinking that if I had to choose one place in Scripture that most succinctly defines sanctification, I'd choose **2 Cor 3:18**, and specifically the words **being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another**. That's what sanctification is!

And these words reveal the way sanctification takes place and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: OUR TRANSMUTATIONS ARE ABOUT GROWTH.

My experience in the military and teaching elementary school taught me that there's not much appreciation for growth:

- There are standards and you reach them or you don't.
- There's no real appreciation for improvement.

For example...

In the military:

- If you want to receive a certain score on your physical fitness test, you have to:
 - Do so many pushups
 - Do so many situps
 - And you have to run 2 miles in a certain amount of time
- If you want to receive the marksman badge, you have to shoot well enough at the range.
- If you want to graduate from Air Assault you have to do a 12-mile ruck march under 3 hours.

Here's why I say there isn't much appreciation for growth...

Imagine two different soldiers who both perform 50 pushups on their physical fitness tests

- If six months earlier Soldier A performed 60 pushups, then he's doing terribly, b/c he just went from 60 to 50.
- If six months earlier Soldier B performed 40 pushups, then he's doing wonderfully, b/c he just went from 40 to 50.

The school system is similar...

If you think of a typical grading system you know what I mean:

- If kids score above a 90% they receive an A.
- 80% to 89% is a B.
- 70% to 79% is a C.
- 60% to 69% is a D.
- And below 60% is failing.

Imagine two different students, who both score 75% on a math test:

- If six months earlier Student A scored 95% on a math test, then he's doing terribly, b/c he just went from 95% to 75%.
- If six months earlier Student B scored 55% on a math test, then he's doing wonderfully, b/c he just went from 55% to 75%.

They both got the same score, but for one that was terrible, and for the other it was great.

So the point is, there's very little appreciation for growth:

- It doesn't matter if you're getting better or worse.
- It only matters where you're at right at this moment.

The Christian life isn't like this...

Look at Paul's words: **from one degree of glory to another:**

- It's all about growth.
- It's all about slowly, but steadily becoming more like Christ.

And notice it's worded in such a way that it implies the growth never stops:

- It says **from one degree of glory to another**...instead of saying until you're glorified, or until you're perfected.
- The reason is, it's discussing this life, and on this side of heaven we'll never be exactly like Christ.

Paul described it this way...

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this OR AM ALREADY PERFECT, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

He meant that he would never be perfect in this life, but he would keep pressing on toward that goal.

One important thing to keep in mind is this...

There's the ideal of sanctification...AND the reality of sanctification:

- The ideal of sanctification is it's a nice, smooth 45% angle.
- The reality of sanctification is it's often much more like the stock market...you hope the stock market is always going up, and traditionally that's the trajectory, but sometimes there are some pretty serious drops:
 - Sometimes there are even recessions.
 - Sometimes there's a pretty big drop.
 - Sometimes we stumble.

But listen to this verse...

Pro 24:16 For the righteous falls seven times AND RISES AGAIN, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.

It says the **righteous falls seven times**...not the unrighteous! Even the righteous fall some number of times.

- So it's not so much about never falling...we're all going to fall.
- It's about getting up when we do fall.

And this is what sanctification often looks like throughout our Christian lives. Falling down...but making sure we get up again.

The final question we need to answer is, "How does this sanctification – or transfiguration – take place?"

Look at the end of **verse 18**. It says **For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit**.

And this brings us to our last lesson...

LESSON 4: WE ARE TRANSFIGURED BY THE SPIRIT AND NOT THE LAW.

Remember Paul has been contrasting the Old Covenant and the New Covenant:

- The Old Covenant is associated with the Law.
- The New Covenant is associate with the Spirit.

So when Paul says **for this**, he's doing two important things:

1. First, he's showing how our sanctification – or transfigurations – DO take place: by the Spirit.
2. Second, he's showing how our sanctification – or transfigurations – do NOT take place: by the Law.

The Law brings us to Christ:

- As Paul says in **Gal 3:24 [it] was our guardian** – or tutor – **until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith** – after we have been justified – or after we have come to Christ – then the Law has served its purpose.
- After that the Spirit begins working in our lives to make us like Christ.

Why is it this way?

We can't be sanctified – or transfigured into the image and likeness of Christ – by obedience to an external standard. We need the Holy Spirit indwelling us and transforming us from the inside out:

- It's the difference between a metamorphosis and a masquerade.
- It's the difference between an inward change and an outward change.

Let me make the point very clear...

No matter how much we might be able to change by following the Law, the temporary change – or the temporary glory that might be produced – is just like the glory Moses experienced under the Law: it's going to fade.

Let me give you what I consider to be the most powerful example of this in all of Scripture, and it will be the most powerful example of this in all of history...

On Wednesday nights during our home fellowship we've been working our way through Revelation verse-by-verse. We reached chapter 20 discussing the Millennium. For 1,000 years Jesus will physically rule and reign on the earth. He'll look then like He looks at the Transfiguration.

And Scripture is clear that He rules with perfect justice...

Here are just a few of a number of verses I could give you:

- **Psa 2:8** [God the Father is speaking to His Son and He says] **“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 YOU SHALL BREAK THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON AND DASH THEM IN PIECES LIKE A POTTER'S VESSEL.”**
- **Rev 2:27 HE WILL RULE WITH A ROD OF IRON, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces...**
- **Rev 12:5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to RULE ALL THE NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON**
- **Rev 19:15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and HE WILL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON.**

So here's the point: the Law will be perfectly enforced!

- Sin will be punished quickly and severely.
- As a result, most people except for the most rebellious – or most foolish – are going to obey.

But it's all outward. Under the law, these people's hearts aren't changed at all.

Given the first opportunity to rebel, listen to what happens...

Rev 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; (now listen to how many people join him...) their number is like the sand of the sea.

Satan is released and you'd think, "There is no way anyone would follow him!"

- But instead, it says he's able to go out and **gather** people **whose number is as great as the sand of the sea.**
- The Law did nothing to change these people's hearts!

I've been asked a few times what the purpose of the Millennial Kingdom is. I think there are a few purposes:

1. One purpose is it fulfills all the OT prophecies about Jesus ruling and reigning...that He didn't fulfill in His First Coming. He finally looks like the Messiah the Jews were expecting.
2. Second, it shows only Christ can set our world straight:
 - Man has dreamed of a golden age throughout all of history, one in which man is free from war, sickness, and death.
 - Man has tried to achieve this goal on his own and failed. It's only when Jesus – and not man – sits on the throne that this can be established.
3. Third, it reveals the wickedness of the human heart. Man has always blamed his sin problem on circumstances, but the Millennium gives people a perfect environment and he still rebels.

And I think the final purpose is an exclamation point on the Bible's teaching that the Law can't change man's heart. This final revolt is proof that the heart of man can only be changed by the Holy Spirit, and not the Law.

Listen to what Jesus said to the religious leaders...

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 So you, also, outwardly seem to be just and upright to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

There's a lot of application in this for us:

- Parents:
 - How might we be prone to turn our children into whitewashed tombs and seek to conform them outwardly?
 - As parents we can seek to make our children look good through outward obedience while ignoring the work of the Spirit in their lives.

- We have to be intentional in training and leading our children that we don't just address outward behavior but that we are truly seeking to address their hearts.
- We have to ask questions that probe their thought life, not just their actions.
- So much effort in parenting goes toward outward obedience while our children are crossing their arms on the inside and perhaps developing bitterness toward us.
- True change, lasting change, is a work of the Spirit not the Law.

Parents:

- You could even go home ask your children how you are doing in this area.
- Ask your children if they feel like you are addressing their heart or simply addressing their outward behavior.

Children:

- How are you doing in the area of obeying from the heart?
- Do you simply obey to please your parents because they are watching, or because you want to please God?

Let me close by saying this...

If you haven't surrendered your life to Christ, then everything is fleshly effort at obeying some outward rules, b/c the Holy Spirit doesn't even indwell you to transfigure you into the image of Christ. You need to repent, confess your sinfulness, and look to Christ in faith.

If you have any questions about anything I've discussed this morning, Pastor Doug and I will be up front after service and we would consider it a privilege to be able to speak with you. Let's pray.