

... And He Was Transfigured Before Them.

On the last Sunday of the Epiphany season (which, this year, will be on February 19), we celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord. This was the day when Jesus took Peter, James, and John, up on the mountain and there revealed to them His glory as the Son of God. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus about the suffering and death Jesus was soon to face, and the voice of God the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." (Matthew 17:5)

That glimpse of glory stayed with the disciples, who were told to keep all this to themselves until after Jesus had been raised from the dead. Peter recounted the event in his second letter, stating, "... we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain." (2 Peter 1:16-18)

So how are we to understand Jesus' Transfiguration today? What does it mean for us?

The poet, Thomas Troeger, has provided us with a hymn that seeks to answer that very question. "Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory" (*Lutheran Service Book* #416), does not merely recount the events of the Transfiguration as most of our other hymns do. Instead, as Troeger has said, "I wrote this hymn to help people see the continuing implications of the transfiguration for a life of Christian faith here and now. ... Death and resurrection is the pattern of Christ-like living, and it is a pattern that can mark our daily lives as well as at the end of our mortal existence."

Swiftly pass the clouds of glory, Heaven's voice, the dazzling light;
Moses and Elijah vanish; Christ alone commands the height!
Peter, James, and John fall silent, Turning from the summit's rise
Downward toward the shadowed valley Where their Lord has fixed His eyes.

Glimpsed and gone the revelation, They shall gain and keep its truth,
Not by building on the mountain Any shrine or sacred booth,
But by following the Savior Through the valley to the cross
And by testing faith's resilience Through betrayal, pain, and loss.

Lord, transfigure our perception With the purest light that shines,
And recast our life's intentions To the shape of Your designs,
Till we seek no other glory Than what lies past Calv'ry's hill
And our living and our dying And our rising by Your will.

As John Matthews has written, "Troeger's hymn places our Lord's transfiguration in its larger context. As miraculous as this event was, it did not represent the completion of Christ's mission or work here on earth. The Gospel writers clearly state that Jesus' destination was Jerusalem and, ultimately, His death. Luke 9:31, in the Greek, refers to this 'departure' as His 'exodus.'" (*LSB Companion to the Hymns, Volume 1*, 416-417)

Therefore, as we soon close out the Epiphany season and begin the season of Lent, we move on through the struggles of our lives in faith, knowing Him in whom we have believed and in whom we rest our hope. We live looking back and remembering who this Jesus is and what He has done for us. At the same time, we live looking through the troubles of this age, looking ahead to our 'exodus,' looking forward to the joys of the resurrection of our bodies and life everlasting with Him.