

Sunday, February 15, 2026

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Matthew 17:1-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

"Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise and have no fear."

My friends,

What are you afraid of?

In Today's Gospel Reading, the disciples were terrified.

And for good reason.

They were in the presence of God's unveiled glory.

Almighty.

Holy.

Terrifying.

Jesus' face shines like the blinding sun.

His clothes are as white as lightning.

And in the blazing cloud, God the Father's voice thunders.

Peter, James and John *"fell on their faces and were terrified."*

What terrifies you?

Are you afraid of the future?

Terrified you'll make the wrong choice?

Scared you're unprepared for what may or may not happen?

Do you fear not being 'enough'?

Are you feeling anxious about politics
and the decisions

and policies made by the world's leaders?

Are you afraid that the world we are giving our children
is getting worse, not better?

Are you scared by where your children are headed?

Do you fear the loss of moral and cultural stability in Canada?

Are you afraid of being alone?

Terrified of shame?

Do you fear illness?

Are you afraid of suffering?

Are you terrified of death?

Are you fearful of judgment?

Do you fear guilt and condemnation?

There are many scary things in this world.
 But the scariest thing is God.

And yet, He is the one who soothes our fears.
 God is the one who comforts.
 God is the one who says, "*Rise and have no fear.*"

The Transfiguration of our Lord is not about spectacle.
 Today's Gospel is about what terrified sinners need.
 Terrified sinners need the God who touches and speaks comfort.

I. On the Mountain: God Reveals His Beloved Son

On the mountain,
 God the Father reveals His glory in Jesus.
*"This is My beloved Son.
 Listen to Him."*

My friends,
 St. Matthew tells us this happened "*after six days.*"
 Six days after what?
 Six days after the
*"time Jesus began to explain to His disciples
 that He must go to Jerusalem
 and suffer many things
 at the hands of the elders,
 chief priests and teachers of the law,
 and that He must be killed
 and on the third day be raised to life."* (Matthew 16:21).

St. Matthew doesn't bring this up for no reason.
 Matthew wants us to see this glory in the light of the cross.
 The suffering man is this same shining Jesus.
 The dying man is the eternal Son of God.

Jesus prepares Peter, James, and John
 for the dark days ahead.
 Before His suffering and death,
 they became "*eyewitnesses of His majesty.*" (2 Peter 1:16b)
 They see Jesus
 in the glory He had with the Father and the Holy Spirit
 "*before the world existed.*" (John 17:5).
 They see now,
 so that after "*the Son of Man is raised from the dead,*"
 they will understand the cross.

The cross was not failure.

The cross was God setting His King on Zion, His holy hill. (Ps. 2)
 So that the nations would be His heritage,
 and the ends of the earth His possession.

In the Old Testament, Moses entered the same cloud.

When he came down, his face shone. [Exodus 34]
 Moses reflected God's glory.

But here, Jesus does not reflect the light.

Jesus *is* the light.
 Jesus is God the Son.

A bright cloud overshadows them.

The Father speaks:
 "*This is My beloved Son,*
with whom I am well pleased.
Listen to Him." [Matthew 17:5]

Terrified, the disciples fall on their faces.

This is the correct response of sinners before holy God.
 So we also come in reverence and awe.
 We stand before Almighty God,
 to whom all hearts are open,
 all desires known,
 and from whom no secrets are hidden.
 And He points us to Jesus.

"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."

Not your heart.

Not your feelings.

Not your opinions.

Not your fears.

Not the world's panic.

Listen to Jesus.

Listen to the beloved Son.

And what does this beloved Son say?

II. Jesus Says, "Rise."

My friends,

Jesus says, "*Rise and have no fear.*"

Your Jesus raises those who have fallen in terror.

Jesus touches terrified sinners with mercy.

The glorious Christ reaches down.

God in the flesh extends His hand.

"He came and touched them."

The One who will be cruelly struck on the cross

now touches them with mercy.

As a child,

did you ever feel scared and alone?

But then,

suddenly,

mom or dad was there?

Is there anything braver

than a little child who has Dad's strong,

comforting hand on their shoulder?

"Rise and have no fear."

God is for you, not against you.

I am with you.

"Rise and have no fear."

This is an invitation.

An invitation to look up and see God's loving-kindness.

To walk with Jesus.

To get up out of the dirt.

"Rise" is resurrection language.

It is the word of Easter morning.

It is waking from the nightmare of sin and death.

*"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."* [Ephesians 5:14]

Jesus raises His disciples.

Out from guilt.

Out from despair.

Out from fear and paralysis.

Can you imagine being Peter, James, or John?

Can you imagine the hand of Jesus touching you and ending your fear?

How would that change your life?

Beloved of the Lord, you do not have to imagine it.

Jesus still touches His people.

In Baptism, He touched you and raised you.

You were buried with Him and raised with Him. [Colossians 2:12]

In the Holy Supper, His true body and blood touch your lips.

The Sacrament of the altar is no mere symbol.

Just like the day in our Gospel Reading,

Heaven breaks out into this world.

Christ our God to earth descends with blessing in His hand.

God comes in the body and the blood.

He gives Himself for heavenly food.

He comes with rank upon rank of the whole host of heaven.

And,
 "At His feet the six-winged seraph,
 Cherubim with sleepless eye,
 Veil their faces to the presence
 As with ceaseless voice they cry:
 'Alleluia, alleluia!
 Alleluia, Lord Most High!'"ⁱ

And His voice still touches you.
 In preaching.
 In absolution: "I forgive you all your sins."

Jesus comes to you and says,
"Rise and have no fear."

III. Jesus Says, "Have No Fear."

My friends,
 Jesus says, *"Have no fear."*

Jesus is not pretending scary things do not exist.
 Fear is not irrational.
 This world is broken.
 Terrible things happen.
 Terrifying and tragic things, like what befell Tumbler Ridge.

Jesus isn't promising to immediately remove all the horrifying things
 from the world.
 He promises to face them with you.

After this, Jesus walks toward Jerusalem.
 He goes to dark Gethsemane.
 He suffers.
 He is rejected.
 He is killed.

The disciples will not bypass the terrifying events.
But they do not need to be terrified.
For they will not face them alone.
Jesus,
whose face is the glory of God,
will confront the darkness.

Christ faces our greatest fear.
Jesus faces our shameful sins.
Jesus faces our guilt.
Jesus faces our judgment.
He faces death.
And He takes it all on Himself.

By His glorious suffering and death,
and by His triumphant resurrection,
Jesus defeats our enemies.
Sin, death, and the devil are broken foes.
Jesus has broken them as with a rod of iron.
He has dashed them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
And so *blessed are all who take refuge in Him.* [Psalm 2]

So in fear, there is courage.
In tragedy, there is hope.
Death is not final.
Death will be undone.
The tears of calamity will be wiped away.

Why?
Because Jesus died for us and defeated all our foes.
And by His stripes we are healed.
So, *rise and have no fear.*

This hope is not wishful thinking.

Peter says,

*"We did not follow cleverly invented stories
when we told you about the power
and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [2 Peter 1]*

They heard the Father's voice

*"come to Him from the Majestic Glory,
saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love;
with Him I am well pleased."*

They were there.

And they give us the sure prophetic Word.

This courageous Word

*is "a light shining in a dark place,
until the day dawns
and the morning star rises in your hearts."*

It is spoken by the One

whose words created the universe.

It is spoken to you.

So, *rise, and have no fear.*

*

My friends,

What would it be like if in your moment of fear,

Jesus touched you and said,

"Rise, have no fear!"?

You already know that He has.

You already know He does.

You already know He will.

In the Word, He says, "Your sins are forgiven."

In Baptism He says, "you are my beloved child."

In the Supper, He says, "given and shed for you."

Therefore, fear doesn't have the final say.
 Jesus does.

So in conclusion,
 let us go down from the mountain with courage.
 For the disciples in our Reading
 had to go down the mountain.
 They left the bright vision behind.
 They walked towards suffering,
 cross and mission.
 But they carried the bright Word of promise.

We, too,
 will leave worship
 with Christ's touch and promise.
 The Beloved Son of God
 has touched you
 with His Word and Sacraments.
 You are forgiven.
 You are raised.
 You are not alone.
Rise and have no fear.

When fears rise this week, remember:
 The glorious Son has touched you.
 He has raised you.
 And He says, "*have no fear.*"

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.