

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from Feb 15, 2015 (Transfiguration of Our Lord)

Is the transfiguration about light or darkness? Clarity or fog? When Elisha receives a double portion of Elijah's spirit of prophecy, isn't it a moment of despair for Elisha—his teacher still testing his faithfulness being taken away in a whirlwind of fiery horses and chariot. At one point Elisha tells the prophets, a bit like Jesus, to say no more about Elijah going away. "Don't speak of it." Can you imagine the company of the prophets asking, "What's going to happen?" And when he comes back across the Jordan, "What happened? What does it all mean?" There are no clear answers, just memories to ground them in the present and point them into the future. Today, stories continue to tell us who we are.

There is a similar experience for the disciples after their transfiguring experience with Jesus and the prophets. "We don't know what this means or who those men were but we want to remember this forever and tell everyone we see! This is a game changer!" In a sense Jesus says, "No, guys, it's not a game changer. This was true all along and nothing has changed." A few verses later, Jesus suggests that it's going to get worse, not better or more exciting. Not at all. It's going to get worse for all of them. They mustn't talk about it until after he dies and rises again." Not that they knew what that meant. Not that any of us knows what that means. It involves change and uncertainty among promises of hope and joy and goodness.

Change is unpleasant. It was for Elisha. It was for the disciples and Jesus. It is for us. We want everything to go on like we're used to it. Change happened for these folks and it was uncomfortable and at times painful, but look at all the good that came for Israel after Elijah's final chariot ride. And with Jesus, the disciples have so much to learn yet, so many experiences, and so much healing and expressions of justice and kindness after their work is done. Though they thought about it, they didn't make permanent markers in the ground and declare that it was all over. They moved on. They made room for many others to make progress and to learn and practice the love and justice of God. Thanks be to God that they did, and all the others who came after them.

So what does Jesus' transfiguration mean for us? And what can that tell us about how we cope with change as we live in the present. Jesus shines with Glory and communes with Elijah and Moses. The disciples sensed the God-presence within Jesus, but this made it crystal clear! They would have been happy if Jesus always shone. People would believe him, and would give them proper respect too. They would like that.

So transfiguration reminds us that Jesus was a God-presence to all around him. The more they listened, the more they watched, the more obvious it was. But Jesus' warning reminds us that God is a sustaining presence rather than a magical charm who makes all trouble go away. Strong abiding presence. Giving courage and wisdom, patience and mercy.

Who is Jesus? The very presence of God. Courage to act *or* wait. Hope, whether we are well or filled with trouble. On the glorious mountain top, or way down in the valley of the shadow of death. Transfiguration looking forward to crucifixion and resurrection. The balance of faithfulness is love regardless of outcomes. Here is freedom. Here is true hope. Taking myself out of the center of all that is, and placing this God present Lord Jesus Christ there instead. This one who leads us into death so that we might know resurrection, who teaches us to live without fear, who shows us that love is success, mercy is life. . .from God and toward our neighbor.

Yes, transfiguration without the cross is a delusion—misplaced trust—a seeking after glory. The cross provides a balance, reality. Resurrection provides the hope, is the reminder that life is far more than doing whatever it takes to make sure the future turns out the way we want it and need it to turn out. Life is living, loving, trusting in the God who holds living, dying, and eternal life in perfect, indestructible balance. It's all good. So let us live our lives in faith, placing Jesus, the transfigured one, the God present one in the center of our lives. Then we will live with courage and conviction. Thanks be to God.