

Sermon: Reflection

Year C, Transfiguration

[Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36, \(37-43\)](#)

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So here's the thing about the Transfiguration. It's the only miracle we see happen to Jesus. Usually he's the one making the world change in unexpected ways. And I know someone in here wants to tactfully murmur, "Resurrection, Cath. Easter. Pretty miraculous." O.K., I'll grant you that it's pretty miraculous that God loves us so much that we are all promised that death will have no dominion over us. But the Resurrection itself, it isn't a miracle, it's a promise. Jesus was the first of God's children to manifest that promise, but it's a promise made to all of us.

Thus, I would argue that the Transfiguration is the only miracle we see happen *to* Jesus. He becomes radiant, he glows. I know people read this moment as proof of Jesus' divine nature. But part of why I treasure it, why I'm so glad it's in Luke, is that, for me, it underlines Jesus' human nature. He *could* be changed. He *could* look different. That means that usually he looked just like the rest of us. Even for Jesus' inner circle, even with Elijah and Moses shooting the breeze with him, God felt it necessary to step in and say, "*This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!*" (Luke 9:35).

Many of you know that I send a briefing of Scripture passages and sermon topics around to the musicians, the deacons, Outreach, half the church for planning purposes. New Beginnings needs time to work up the songs that are so powerful and so well adapted to our worship services. The musicians ask to have them three months in advance. It makes sense for me to do a bunch at a time, so the worship plans usually cover 2-3 months, depending on the church season. We've all agreed that we'll work to the plan but if real world events require it, or if the Holy Spirit speaks, then we'll toss the plan and meet the world or the Spirit where it is.

So back on September 5th, and actually well before that because there's a bunch of other work I need to do before publication, I described today's worship service as "non-traditional," which is code for "no sermon." I said that today's worship service would focus on how *When we bring God deeply into our lives, we are physically changed. We can proudly share those changes with the world.* How I was going to do that, how I was going to make that argument, how I was going to craft an activity or discussion to make that possible, I had no idea. When Russell asked me at the end of January if I needed a lay reader today, I said, "Nope. Non-traditional service."

Then Lindsey asked me if we could use worship to get some concrete information about prayer to use in the Confirmation Class. That was tricky because there was the service in Hollis, and then Rev. Rankin was preaching. But yeah, we could probably get something if we used the non-traditional service on March 3rd, but would that give her enough time to turn it around for our Confirmation meeting on March 10th? Maybe we should kinda prime the pump and I'd take over the Children's Message when the UCC Conference minister was here. Did she think she could make a bulletin insert for folks to fill out? I didn't think we get that much on the bulletin inserts. But it would get the juices flowing for this week.

I will be honest. I had this wad of blue pieces of paper, different sizes, some folded, some not. I had had a long week and frankly, by 12:30 or so last Sunday, I was ready for someone else to be the minister. My intention was just to get the higgledy-piggledy mess of paper into a binder clip. I'd throw the blank ones from the folks who didn't know what to say in the recycle bin, sling the

remaining ones into Lindsey's box in the mail room and let her deal with it. But you know how, when you're figuring out how to get a mess of paper all facing the same way, you can't help but read what's on it.

We had close to 100% participation. Even from people whose very first Sunday in this church had only been going on for about 10 minutes. Even from parents wrangling very busy, very wiggly kids. And not just participation. Candor and grace and depth and vulnerability. There weren't *any* blank ones. There were some with one-word answers, but they read like a poem. There was such diversity. There were reasons for prayer I had never imagined. There were ways of praying I couldn't wait to try.

Do you get it? You glowed. 2 Corinthians says *And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If it is my job to speak truth, to call it when I feel there is more we can do for the furtherance of God's will in this world, then it is my job to speak the truth when you are radiant with the glory of God. You may be praying in your cars or as you fall asleep, in the woods or by the sea or silently or to remember your blessings. But collectively, as a gathered body of Christ, you glowed when you spoke of prayer in your life.

Do you get how rare it is to get 30 adults together in one room, who pray, who pray enough that they can, with no warning and within 5 minutes, clearly, lovingly articulate their prayer experience to total strangers? I have to call it. You glowed.

I know you're uncomfortable. I'm the one who said not 20 minutes ago that to come to the Lord's table "You do not need to be perfect for God is perfecting us all." I caught you at a good moment before the coveting and the idolatry and all the other stuff we're not supposed to do as followers of God's Son, God's Chosen One. But I did catch you. So, later on, take a minute, if you haven't already, and read through the insert that has all your responses on it.

You guys made this most traditional worship service non-traditional. There was nothing left for me to preach on. All I can do is reflect that glow back to you, to be sure that you see it.

Yifan and Sanjay asked if they could share a song they've been working on. It seemed like it would fit today. It's called *I See God in You*. So in this non-traditional service, let's end the sermon with song. The words are in your bulletin so you can follow along. If you want to join in once you get the hang of it, go ahead.

To quote one of you, "God's grace and healing for us all." Amen