

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Last Sunday of Epiphany/The Transfiguration: March 2, 2025

Transformation and Transfiguration

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Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on this last Sunday of Epiphany, where we explore Jesus accepting his mission, being declared God's son, and preparing for his journey to Jerusalem and to the cross.

The Incarnation of Our Lord and the Transfiguration of Our Lord stand as bookends or brackets at the beginning and end of the Christmas and Epiphany seasons. The two festivals complement each other in striking ways. In the Incarnation, the divine partakes of the human condition. In the Transfiguration, the human Jesus shares in divine glory.

In the Incarnation, the Son of God takes on human form and resides with us mortals on earth. In the Transfiguration, the earthly Jesus shares for a moment the company of two great and worthy residents of heaven: Moses and Elijah. Incarnation and Transfiguration are antiphonal. They enclose a portion of the church year that is now fast coming to an end, just before the period of Lent.

We are also on nature's calendar entering a time of the year when the caterpillar enters the cocoon and literally turns itself into soup as it rearranges all its parts from the silly fat green worm-like creature into the flying beauty of a butterfly.

Although I have never spoken to a butterfly, nor have I asked the caterpillar of its fears around death and resurrection (the process of which it will face), I would imagine there might be some natural anxiety.

I believe part of that caterpillar's journey is left to nature taking its course, no matter how it feels about the journey. Does this remind you a little about yourself? Whenever we feel we need to change, or sometimes endure a change we have no control over, we get anxious. Yet a part of us knows that God is with us and even in the soup of rearranging our lives, we will come out with wings.

But when we consider the butterfly and that nature is taking its course, we are in a way saying God's got this. Thy will be done. For Jesus and his disciples, they, like us, required some more direct reassurance that the journey they and we are taking is not in vain, and that the promise that lay ahead will also feed our hope. This is the importance of today's reading. A message of hope before the future injustices and death of Jesus occur.

The transfiguration of Jesus is a story that is mostly about Jesus giving his disciples a strong picture of him to hold on to as they enter the dark days of his suffering and death in Jerusalem. As such, it is a bit of a "courage" for the journey, something that they could return to in order to ground and center themselves so that they could push on through the bleakness ahead of them with hope.

It is also a time of reassurance to Jesus himself that life is not ended, but changed. He sees Moses and Elijah and accepts his journey to the cross, all the while knowing that – from the soup of inhumanity- he will rise, forever changed.

Moses and Elijah speak with Christ about his upcoming suffering and death—which Luke describes as Jesus' departure, a theologically significant choice of words. Death is not the end, and Jesus will be departing in order to be able to return. We have no other details about the content of that conversation, but it doesn't seem a far stretch to me that it was full of love, and that it encouraged the Son of Man to be able to talk with someone he could see about what lies ahead.

And what about the disciples? We have Peter with a desire to keep this moment going so that Jesus can have it for just a moment more. Peter tells

Jesus that it is good that they are there, but maybe that's more of his gentle way of saying primarily that it is good that Jesus is there, and although they may or may not have heard the details of Jesus' conversation, depending on which Gospel you read this story from, I am sure they wanted Jesus to stay with them as they feared what lie ahead.

We all know the world right now is changing in many ways and in many sectors. We know this year we all will grow a little older and the things that we are familiar with will be replaced by the new. We, like our caterpillar friend, will be forced to change as change is the one constant thing in life.

But for the caterpillar again, our thoughts are that nature will take care of it. For the disciples, it seems (at least for this moment) they feel God the Father is present to take care of Jesus, and Jesus will take care of them. And for the most part, all parties will silently move forward.

As we journey toward Lent, we are called to ask ourselves what needs transformation in our lives. What do we need to change or what are we called to do after we have heard the words, "This is my Son, My Chosen, listen to him."

Jesus receives his reassurance from God the Father that life will change for him but not be ended, eternally. Those of us who have accepted Jesus as our Savior have the reassurance that life will change and not be ended eternally. But like Jesus, we will still need to journey to Jerusalem. We will still need to face our own demons, the injustices of society, the desertion and possible denial of family, the fears of a human body that may be failing, the job that may be ending, the relationships that may be changing.

But as Christians, as one who accepts that Jesus is God's son and that we are to listen to him and model our lives after him, we are called to head into our future and into change, no matter how scary, with hope and reassurance that God and Jesus go before us.

As we move forward into the soup of our future, consider what transformation you are called to embrace. Let your prayers bring you hope, and that hope bring you closer to a more Christ-centered life. Amen