

“The Glory of God or an Alien Space Ship – You Be the Judge”

Mark 9:2-9

Today is the last Sunday of the Epiphany Season. On this day, we celebrate the transfiguration of our Lord. When Christ entered into the world as the child of Mary, He suppressed His divine glory for a while. From the time that Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, He demonstrated only a small fraction of His glory and power. In the Catechism, we refer to this as Christ’s “humiliation” which began when He was conceived and ended when He was crucified, died, and was buried. Christ’s “exaltation” begins when He descended into hell and proclaimed His victory over Satan.

During His life and ministry, Jesus did perform many fabulous miracles and show His power. What we saw last week with the healing of the leper was an awesome display. Jesus reaches out and touches this “unclean” leper. No other person could do what He did. If a “clean” person touches something that is unclean, what happens? If you take a shower, wash your hands, pour the hand sanitizer on, and rub it in, you would say, “I am clean.”

Then you touch something dirty. Does your cleanness transfer over to that which was dirty? It never works that way for us. But for Jesus, He

has accomplished that which we could never do. He reverses that which sin brought into this world: He touches the leper and makes him clean; He dies on the cross to take away the guilt of your sin, and finally He rises from the dead. He brings life out of death. Eternal life; life to the full.

This is the almighty Son of God. He is the King of all creation. He is the Lord of all the universe. He rules over heaven and earth. The full greatness of Christ was not outwardly visible during His time of humiliation. Oh sure, there were times, if you were watching, you could see Him doing that which only could be done by the power of God. But the fullness of His majesty and glory never truly shined forth. The closest you get is this one occasion when Jesus met with Moses and Elijah.

Mark records in his Gospel, "There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."

Quite often when the glory of God was revealed on earth, God did so with dazzling white light. As we read in the Epistle lesson, St. Paul retells the events from Moses' day when the Israelites were afraid to even look at the fading, reflected glory of God that lingered in the face of Moses after he had spoken to the Lord. They asked him to put a veil over his face to hide the shining white radiance of God.

A while ago, I was watching one of those "Mysteries of the Bible" type shows on A&E or the History or Discovery channel, and there was a so-called theologian or self-proclaimed Bible expert who said that Elijah's ride into heaven in a fiery chariot and Elijah's presence on the Mount of

Transfiguration was the result of him being abducted by space aliens. I'm not joking. This is what he said. (And it was on TV, so it must be true).

The fiery chariot was how an ancient person would describe the rockets of a space ship, and the intense white light of the Mount of Transfiguration was also from the space ship. It seems that modern man still wants to veil the radiance and truth of God.

Like the Israelites who hid from the glory of God at Mount Sinai, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were also very frightened. "They didn't know what to say, for they were terrified." They had never seen such a thing. This dazzling white radiance from Christ is overwhelming. No one can look upon the face of the Lord and live. The fullness of the glory of God is too much for sinners to deal with.

An alien space ship they could have handled, but this was the glory of God. He shines forth with light. He reverses light and darkness. He doesn't cast shadows. He shines light. In John's Revelation, we read that there is no sun in the sky, the Lamb, the Christ, is the source of light and it fills heaven.

There is a reason that the Christian Church has historically used white as the liturgical color of many festivals. White symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity, and innocence.

This is the reason that the traditional baptismal clothing is also white. When Christ was baptized, He exchanged places with us. He reverses that which we could never reverse.

He took on our sin, so that when we were baptized, our sins were

washed away, we were clothed in Christ's white garment of perfect righteousness, and we were given the promise that in faith we will always be righteous and blameless in God's sight; which is the promise that God made to each of you.

He has reversed that which sin brought into this world: Just as He cleansed the leper of his illness and transferred His cleanness onto that which was unclean, He forgives sin. He transfers His righteousness onto those who are unrighteous. And finally He brings life out of death.

You have been washed clean of your sin. When we look at Christ's Church, the Body of Christ which gathers each week to hear God's Word and participate in His broken body and shed blood, we see infants who cannot utter a single intelligible word; we see young children who are learning new things every day; we see junior high and high school kids who already think they know everything; we see adults who are still learning about God at the same time they are preparing the next generation; and we see those who have run the good race and whose bodies tell them that their journey is drawing to a close.

However, as God's people gather around Word and Sacrament, God only sees us as if we were all wearing our Baptismal garments. God sees us in the dazzling white light of Christ's righteousness.

The white garment of Baptism is not just for that one day. For all of God's people, the Good News today is that Christ has borne your sin and put upon you His perfect righteousness. So shall you in faith ever stand before Him. Amen.