

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Transfiguration  
Saturday, February 6, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, February 7, 2016 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Victory is Ours!”

Luke 9:28-36

We are drawing to the close of the Epiphany Season. This is the last time we will rejoice with “Alleluias” until Easter. On Ash Wednesday, our focus will change. These past weeks, we have seen Jesus manifest His Divine power at the wedding feast at Cana by turning water into wine. We have seen Jesus cast out demons and heal Peter’s mother-in-law. And we have witnessed the Baptism of our Lord, where God the Father spoke from heaven and said, “This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased.”

Throughout this season, in our Gospel lessons, we have been witnesses to miraculous and powerful events, where Jesus gives us little glimpses of His Divine Majesty – but the fullness of the His glory was still hidden. In our Gospel today, Luke tells us about the one time when Jesus did not so greatly suppress His Divine strength: The Transfiguration of our Lord.

Luke tells us that the appearance of His face changed and that His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. What a sight that must have been – to witness a little bit of heaven on earth.

In case you were unaware, there is a football game on TV later today. The Super Bowl is called the greatest spectacle in sports. It is routinely the most watched television show of the year.

What is typically the most talked about part of the game? The commercials! They get more attention than the actual game. Have you noticed that they have not pre-released the commercials like they have been doing the past couple of years? The last few years, most of the commercials were viewed and voted on as to which ones were the best even before the game. You could watch them online. Not this year. They want all the people to experience it together.

The companies that are paying millions of dollars for seconds of air time want their commercials to be the topic of conversation tomorrow and in the weeks ahead. They want you focused on and talking about the commercials more than they care if you even pay attention to the game.

I find it interesting that Jesus told Peter, James, and John to keep silent and not tell anyone about what they had seen? They joined in the heavenly conversation with Moses and Elijah. They witnessed a little bit of heaven, and Peter wanted to build some tents and stay.

At this point, Jesus is turning His attention to Jerusalem and begins the final leg of His journey to the cross and grave. Jesus does not want His disciples focusing on the glory of heaven. Heaven is not the goal. The resurrection of the body is the ultimate goal. Jesus knows that pondering about heaven can be a distraction.

You should have been in Bible class last Sunday, as we continue our discussion of Revelation. I got a little bit diverted and began pondering about what heaven is like. Will we be creative? Will new music be produced? Will we write? Will there be things to discover? How different

will things be before the resurrection versus after the resurrection? I have no idea. And, right now, it doesn't matter. Heaven is not the goal. What we DO for all eternity after the resurrection is not what is important. The goal is the resurrection – joining Christ in the resurrection is all that matters.

When the Super Bowl is over and the winning team stands there and rejoices in the victory, no one is going to ask them if they are excited to watch all the commercials because they didn't get to see them yet.

The victory is all that matters. We have been told about heaven. Ezekiel and Paul give us a few glimpses of it in Scripture. It sounds so wonderful. Yet, we don't really know what it will be like. Paul says that there just aren't words to describe it.

Like the conversation I started in Bible class last week, desiring to know the details of heaven leads to a lot of pointless pondering. Our task is to know what we know. Victory is ours! The resurrection is real! Jesus is the firstborn of the dead. The grave cannot hold you either. Nothing else matters.

Peter, James, and John witnessed amazing things on the Mt. of Transfiguration as heaven and earth joined together in and around the presence of Christ. Even though they could not see Him, they were able to hear the voice of God Himself, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him." This was a great and marvelous event, but the resurrection is the goal.

Our Mt. of Transfiguration is right here in our worship. We cannot see

Him, but God speaks to us in the Word. We have the physical presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament. Heaven and earth join together in and around the presence of Christ. We join in the heavenly conversation as we gather with angels, arch-angels, and all the company of heaven.

Hearing God's Word and receiving His body and blood in the Sacrament is as close as we can get to heaven here on earth. We don't know exactly what heaven is going to be like. Of one thing we can be sure, heaven will certainly not be a boring place. There is a reason that when Peter caught just a glimpse of the glory of the life to come he said, "It is good Lord to be here. Let's build three tents." Peter did not want to leave.

St. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, "To live is Christ, to die is to gain...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far."

We find comfort in knowing that our loved ones who have died in faith are sharing in that glory as we speak, and with angels, arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, they are glorifying and praising God's Name with us.

We will join them in that eternal glory either when we die in our Baptismal faith or when Christ returns – whichever comes first. Our goal remains the same: the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Victory is ours!

Here this evening/morning, we are privileged to truly have "a little bit of heaven on earth," and we echo those words of Peter, "It is good Lord to be here." Amen.