

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Transfiguration
Saturday, February 26, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 27, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

“A Little Bit of Heaven on Earth”

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. Among other miracles, we have seen Jesus cause a great catch of fish. 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 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 dazzling white. What a sight that must have been – to witness a little bit of heaven on earth.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have heard Jesus promise in our Gospel

readings that your reward will be great in heaven. This past weekend, we took the 7th and 8th grade Confirmation students to Camp CILCA and we discussed how Satan is working very hard to fight against you and deceive you so that you do not believe or understand the truth and that you veer off and believe a lie (which is what Adam did).

Do not substitute the truth with a lie. That is a good rule of thumb. There is only one path to heaven. Christ our Lord says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." Through faith and forgiveness, the path to heaven is open for us.

But what is heaven like? We have been told about heaven. Ezekiel and Paul give us a few glimpses of it in Scripture. And being in heaven, being in the presence of the full glory of God is what we all long for. It sounds like such a wonderful place. Yet, we don't really know what that place is like. All that we know is our life here.

But that is why we are here this day. Our escape from sin, our escape from the lies of Satan and the false hope of this world is found in what we do here on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Our God is the God Peter, James, and John found on the Mt. of Transfiguration. They saw Him as they had never seen Him before. Jesus had revealed His divine nature by pointing them to His Word. Now they saw Him in His glory.

We have seen Him as He has revealed His divine nature through His Word.

But He is not some mythical concept merely found in books. The God of Scripture is not some impersonal, divine force of nature. Moses knew the Lord face to face. We know the Lord in a more intimate manner as He has chosen to make our bodies the temple of His Holy Spirit.

God is found in the person of God the Father who spoke on the mountain, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him.” God is found in the person of Jesus Christ who walked and talked with Peter, James, and John. God is found in the Holy Spirit who has made you His dwelling place.

God has chosen to reveal Himself through His Word and in His Sacraments – the means of grace. Our Mt. of Transfiguration is right here in our worship. God speaks to us in the Word. We have the physical presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament. When we hear God’s Word, we are freed from the lies and the guilt and the burden of this world, and we experience a little bit of the reality that God intended for us from creation. Because of the hearing of God’s Word and the faith that has been created through that Word, we are once again in a right relationship with God.

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. However, of two things we can be certain: there is no doubt that we will be joined with choirs of angels singing praises to the Lord.

We see that in the little glimpses of God's throne room revealed in Scripture. And like Moses and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration, we are going to be in bodily form, communing with Christ. We will join in that heavenly conversation.

And, I would speculate with great certainty that heaven will not be a boring place. There is a reason that when Peter caught just a glimpse of the glory of God 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 the 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. Until that happens, we will continue to gather together as a community of believers and receive a glimpse of heaven in God's Word, in His Absolution, and in His Sacrament.

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.