

Sermon for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

'And as Jesus was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.'

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The Lord took three disciples with Him to the mount, *Peter and John and James*. The Evangelist St. Luke brings up to the mount another disciple of Christ: you.

Lift up your head, raise your eyes. What is it you see?

'The Lord's face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.' For the true face of our Lord has revealed itself; that face which *'no man shall see, and live.'* The face from which Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock as the glory of the Eternal God passed by.

What was then hidden, is now shown, revealed all the disciples of the Lord, to all those who have been purged of sin by the blood and water of the sacrifice, for *'blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.'*

See also that He shines in such *'surpassing, godlike brightness'*, for he *'is the light of the world'*, indeed *'a consuming fire'*. Again the deity of Christ is shown forth, for *'God is light; and in him is no darkness at all.'*

Lift up your head, raise your eyes. What is it you see?

'And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah.' For every great king brings with him a bodyguard; and every loyal bodyguard looks to the countenance of his king for orders and for instruction. So it is that Christ, the King of Kings, is flanked in glory on the one hand by the Law, on the other by the Prophets, for both *spoke of him*, both looked to Him; *'the Son has come to do the will of His father'*, for *'everything written about Christ in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'*

'And they were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory, and spoke of his exodus.' For it is wrong to translate here this little word as simply 'departure'. It is written *'they spoke of his exodus.* For even as Moses would be led from the land of his people into the bonded decadence and evil of Egypt, there to set free God's people, to destroy their enemy Pharaoh, and to bring them through the wilderness into a *land flowing with milk and honey.* So has the Son of Man left the land of His Father *who is in heaven,* into the fallenness and universal darkness of this world to set free the bearers of the image of God, to destroy their enemy Satan, and bring us through the wasteland of this mortal life into a land where *'death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain; for the former things have passed away.'* For the Transfiguration of our Lord before you makes a promise: *'They will see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night will be no more.'*

'And spoke of his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.' For will not the Son of Man first leave this world through the portal of death, there to descend into the Egypt of Hell, to sack Sheol and bind the devil, within the walls of the evil one's own fortress? To plunder the great accuser's possessions within his own citadel? Therefore the Son approaches the gates of hell, bearing no weapon but his naked humanity; for man was put to shame by the serpent. So then shall the serpent be put to shame by man. The Son approaches the gates of hell; *'he sets his face like a flint toward Jerusalem.'* *'The city which murdered the prophets.'*

Lift up your head. Raise your eyes. What is it you see?

'A cloud overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.' For God hides Himself in the cloud of His glory, that sinful men might be spared and live. But to enter into the this glorious incense demanded death. Yet now sinful men have entered into the cloud of His glory, now descended upon Christ our God, and live. For what reason are they spared? For what reason are you spared?

'A voice came out of the cloud, saying 'This is my Son, my Chosen One; hear him!'

For, one great commandment was given to the Jews, *'Hear, O Israel.'* Those in ages past did not hear, and were destroyed. Now, as Christ goes to Jerusalem, as He goes to the cross, as he descends into hell, He makes within Himself and through his blood a new nation, a new Israel, which shall indeed *hear* his Word,

even as they have *seen His face, and lived*. This new Israel shall hear his Word of forgiveness, and so be spared, for *'In the pillar of the cloud, God spoke to us [...]* *The Lord Our God answered us. He was a forgiving God to them.'*

'And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was alone.' For alone, He will redeem us. Alone He will in Jerusalem fashion from His sufferings our everlasting salvation. *Keep silent, behold, 'The Lord is great in Zion.'*

'The King in his might has executed justice.'

'Holy is he.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Texts: Psalm 99, Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Luke 9:28-36