

The Transfiguration of Our Lord – B
LSB #414
Text – 2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, & four-year old grandson. The elderly man’s hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, & his steps faltered. They ate meals together at the table, but grandfather’s shaky hands & failing sight made it difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon to the floor. Grasping his glass, he often spilled milk on the tablecloth.

The son & daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. “We must do something about father,” said the son. “I’ve had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, & food on the floor.” So the husband & wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate by himself while the rest of the family enjoyed their dinner.

Since the older man had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in Grandfather’s direction, eating there alone, he sometimes had a tear in his eye. Yet, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled his food. The grandson watched it all in silence.

One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, “What are you making?” Just as innocently, the boy responded, “I’m making a little bowl for you & Mama to eat from when I grow up.” The four-year-old smiled & went back to work.

Cutting to the heart those words left his parents speechless. Tears began slipping down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand & gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the rest of the family. For some reason, neither husband nor wife was bothered again when a fork was dropped, milk was spilled, or a tablecloth soiled.

It's a rather blunt story. The point isn't at all subtle. People in the marketing profession would probably try to polish it up. In the theological world it's best to leave it just as it is. Many of Jesus' parables were just as pointed, just as blunt. The rudeness of the son & daughter-in-law, towards the frail old father, is not the least different from any of our sins.

You may well not agree with my assessment, but the Word of God does. After all, I am not really giving you my assessment at all, but God's.

Psalm 53: Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

[Luke 18](#): "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone."

Genesis 6: The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, & that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Psalm 130: If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

I hope you recognize that last verse. We used it in the confession of our sins, but how often do you apply that verse to your daily thoughts, words & deeds? We speak

those words, & others like them, at the very beginning of the service, not to be nagging, but to point you towards the only source of true joy & hope in this life. And that source is not you. It is not me.

That's the point of confessing our sins. Yes, the answer is Jesus, but other religions, other spiritualities, & popular psychology, always point you to yourself to find hope & joy. The world refers to it as finding self-fulfillment, a violation of the very 1st commandment. The only place fulfillment can be found is in our relationship with Jesus Christ, & that is outside of ourselves. We are sinful & unclean, & because sin twists everything backwards, even as children of God, we are still comfortable with some of our sins. The rudeness of the son & daughter-in-law, towards the frail old father, is not the least different from any of our sins.

Probably the majority of us here would hold up the Bible as a sacred book of truth, until we come to the part that says we have nothing good within us. Yet, as depressing & melancholy, as the confession of our sins may be, the good news that our confession leads to, is that our Lord & Savior does not leave us in our sins. He did something about them.

All other forms of spirituality require you & me to take care of sin on our own. If you're annoyed by all this talk of sin, if you feel that it's all been taken care of, that alone proves your sinful nature is in control, because our saintly nature never rebels against confession. In fact it longs to confess & to unload the burden of our iniquity.

In the opening story, the son & daughter-in-law were quite comfortable with their sin until their son began to mimic their actions. In the most sensitive areas of our lives we have an incredible ability to blind ourselves to the types of sin we've grown

comfortable with. That blindness is what allows us to do so much harm to others, even those we truly love.

In the reading from 2 Corinthians, Paul describes the Israelites while he's writing to the people of the church in Corinth. Today, he's speaking to us, "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted." The veil is a figurative way of stating that we are blind to our sins, blind to the truth, blind to the Gospel.

And often, we've ended up blind to our sin, by our own choice. The son & daughter-in-law were afraid that the old man's sloppy eating would damage their belongings. Since their possessions were their God they were blind to the harm they did to the grandfather. They did that harm while valuing the clean floor & unsoiled tablecloth more highly than their relationship with another human being. Because of the man's trembling hands, **blurred eyesight, & faltering steps, they weren't seeing the truth that this frail grandfather was, "...reflecting the glory of the Lord, while being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."**

What is your understanding of the process our Lord uses to transform us into the same image? Our pride, our arrogance, our sinful nature, they must be destroyed, or they'll destroy us, & those around us. Our sinful actions, while forgiven, are still hurting & harming our loving God, & other people, every single hour of every single day.

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone." Pride & arrogance is a path leading away from our Savior. Confession is the path leading back to Him. What a blessing it is we've been shown that path. Granted,

it's not the broad & easy road. The straight & narrow is difficult, but it is the only road to peace, & the only road to life.

We are encouraged in our walk, by the presence of Jesus on that path, as He is, "...the Way, & the truth & the life." And as we take the path of confession, leading back to God, the Apostle Paul reminds us, as well as the Corinthians, "But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." You see, confession is also a path by which we see God's love more clearly.

Our pride & arrogance get in the way of that sort of vision. Yahweh's Spirit is busily at work killing the sinful nature in us, & that is painful. It's why the confession of our sins can be so annoying. We're far too comfortable with some of them. The son & daughter-in-law did not see their sin until the heartrending realization that their son was planning the same for them.

That's what being transformed into the same image as our Lord is often about, a heart rending death of the old sinful Adam within us. But in that agonizing death Jesus gives us life, & in that whole process of dying & coming to life again, our Lord & Savior is reflecting His own glory in us. As the people around us see us dying to our sins, & taking the path of confession back to God, they also see the end result of peace & life given to us by God's Holy Spirit. So in spite of the brokenness we see in this life, the pain & the suffering, we can know that God is working through it to transform us into His image.

The pain & suffering is only necessary because of the hardness of our hearts. The transformation that's taking place is far too often against our will, yet it is for our good. The only way to see that, in spite of the suffering, is through the eyes of faith.

We're definitely not born with those eyes at our physical birth, & once given, it's still not easy learning to use them.

That learning is part of what we call the process of sanctification. It's the Holy Spirit working in us to make us holy. For this life it seems to be a long & painful process, but don't be deterred the momentary. Our lives are already now eternal as God sees us as holy already today.

It's impossible for us to see that, so we trust the words & promises of God as the Holy Spirit works in us, enabling us to put our faith in Jesus. He carried our sins to the cross & they're eternal effect has been rendered powerless ever since. In spite of our rebellious will, God's love is stronger & more powerful, able to open the eyes of even the most hardened heart.

The Apostle Paul was an example of that. Even though it's probably just a made up story, the son & daughter-in-law in the opening illustration may be used as examples of that. It is the mercy of God that makes us active & sincere in the living out of our faith in Christ. By God's mercy we want to love others, instead of having to. Amen.

'Tis good Lord, to be here! Yet we may not remain; but since Thou bidst us leave the mount, come with us to the plain. Amen.