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## *Seeing the Face of God through Humans!*

**A sermon by the Rev. Salmoon Bashir**  
**The Last Sunday after the Epiphany – Year B**

Like many of you, my grandmother was a woman of deep faith and dedicated her whole life to serve God and the Church in many ways. She together with her family converted to Christianity in her young age before the partition of India and Pakistan. She had seven sons – all boys, and my father was the youngest among all. She passed away when my father was in his 8th grade; he was only 14 years old at the time. But the impact she had on his life and faith in those 14 years, the time he spent with his mother certainly remained with him for the rest of his life. Later on, my dad used to share one particular story of her with us. When any person visited her, my grandmother always viewed it as the divine presence coming into her house. She was seeing the face of God in anyone who came to her home. The joy and that elevated image of seeing God through people was even stronger when Anglican missionaries from the Church of England or their families visited her home. She always believed that God visited her home, saying “I see the face of God through these humans!” Seeing the face of God through humans!

Today’s gospel talks about how disciples reacted to seeing Jesus in God’s divine glory for the first time. This was the first time they saw Jesus as perfect human and perfect God.

Today is the last Sunday before Lent begins, the Transfiguration Sunday. The change of seasons. Change in the rhythm of our lives. From the season after Epiphany to the season of Lent, the season of contemplation and reflection. These seasons depict the life of Jesus on earth – walking in the streets and feeding thousands of people, healing the sick and the blind, trekking to the mountain where His Divine glory shone, and then moving on the way to the cross and the last steps of his faithful journey on earth. The Christian life or being a follower of Christ is similar to the life of Jesus, with its highs and lows, walking in the deserts and valleys. There are moments of temptation, then there is glory of God in the event of transfiguration and then passion walk on the road to Calvary. Christian life is like a walk on Caesarean and Jerusalem roads and in between there are mountains of transfiguration which give us an opportunity to transform and renew ourselves, to see the Divine in a human face. Christian life is a rhythmic life where we continually strive to transform ourselves by elevating Jesus Christ in our lives and seeing the Divine glory through Him in each other.

When Jesus took his three disciples to experience the mountaintop divine glory, Peter, James, and John were not aware what awaited them at the top of the mountain. Jesus wanted to spend time in quietness and solitude, and so he only took his close-knitted community with him. When they all were up at the mountaintop, Jesus transfigured before them, and his physical appearance changed into something different. Jesus was changed from inside out, shining as bright as the sun. “His clothes became dazzling white such as no one on earth could bleach them.”

But it was not only Jesus who was glorified, transfigured, and elevated at that moment in the presence of the famous prophets, Moses and Elijah. His disciples were also transformed as they witnessed and experienced the Divine glory of their Messiah. These three men had read and heard about Moses and Elijah as prophets who came close to God. Moses saw God through the burning bush and then through a cloud. And Elijah witnessed the glory of God in the deep silence. During their past encounters, these prophets did not have the ability to withstand the presence of God’s Divine glory but at this time they are bearing witness to something extraordinary. This time Elijah and Moses are standing next to Jesus who is radiating the Divine glory in a human body. We believe that Jesus Christ was fully human and fully God, but this was the first time these disciples experienced the glory of God through the face of Christ. Here, both of them, Moses and Elijah and three of Jesus’ disciples are witnessing the glory of God, the Divine nature of God, through the son of God,

Jesus Christ.

Peter, James, and John who are familiar with the humanity of Christ now they see the glory of God shining through and out of that humanity. Jesus who was born of a woman as fully man, there is no obstruction and hindrance of divine glory through that human body. In fact, Jesus' humanity became the medium to show the divine glory. Moses and Elijah are witnessing something which they longed for their whole lives – to see the face of God, to see and experience the divine glory of God and here they are in the presence of their Lord. Seeing the face of God through the son of God. Seeing the divine face of God through a human!

My dear brothers and sisters, the transfiguration Sunday is also about our own transformation – to be transformed into divine glory of love. As God declared his love for his only begotten son in the presence of two prophets and three disciples, the declaration of that love in the divine glory is for us as well. When the glory of God shines from our lives, in the daily mundane encounters, in going up and going down, and in the middle roads, we extend the same belovedness which God extended to his son Jesus Christ, being vessels of God's glory to our communities, to our cities and to the world. You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter. You are my beloved child. The ripple effect of this belovedness moves beyond our imagination.

Jesus was transfigured, elevated among humans as the Divine. His disciples were transformed by seeing Jesus in the human form and experiencing God through Jesus' Divine light. Maybe their transformation did not happen all at once. Maybe it took them days and nights, mountains, valleys, and deserts but the truth is transformation happened in the lives of Peter, James, and John and the others through the divine glory and belovedness of Jesus.

The story of transfiguration of Jesus conveyed a particular message to Jesus' disciples by seeing Jesus in a new way. They went from seeing Jesus as a prophet, son of a carpenter, or maybe a Messiah who can perform miracles, to the one who is filled with divine glory, who became the vehicle to God's divine glory in a human body. Jesus is not absorbed with the divine nature of God, in fact he is the one who can transmit that glory to all so they can be transformed as well, so all can bask in the overflowing divine presence of God.

My brothers and sisters, this story of transfiguration today, directs our attention not only to the divine glory of Jesus but it also brings us to a point of our own transformation. I believe my grandmother had her own moments of transformation to be able to see that divine glory and face of God in all who ever came in contact with her. The invitation today for each of us is to start seeing people that we have known for a long time in a new, divine light. Look around you! Whether it is here in this place now or in your life, look to your left and to your right. Let yourself see the divine glory of God that so abundantly shines through each human face!

In a few moments we will proclaim, affirm, and reaffirm our baptismal covenant with these words: "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons?" After hearing today's Gospel, maybe we can rephrase this question as "will you serve God by seeing the divine glory in ordinary humans like me and you? Will you see them as the vessels of God's divine glory?" Seeing the face of God through humans! Amen!