

**AUGUST 6, 2017 ---- HOLY TRANSFIGURATION DAY**

**ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**II PETER 1: 10-19  
MATTHEW 17: 1-9**

**“CHRIST IS GLORIFIED”**

A 12 year old boy was sent by his family to a boarding school far, far from home. It was so far that they didn't even have him come home for the Christmas break. Instead, they made arrangements for him to stay for those couple of weeks at the home of some family friends who lived near the school. So the young boy took his suitcase and moved into the family's home, very depressed at not getting to be home for Christmas. He unloaded his suitcase in the guest room and put up a framed picture of his father. The hosts wanted to cheer him up so they came into the bedroom and talked to him about how much fun they would all have for Christmas. And they asked him, "What gift would you like for Christmas?" The young fellow, with tears in his eyes, pointed to the picture of his dad, and said, "For my gift, I would like for my father to step out of that picture frame." (Richard Caemmerer, Come, Immanuel, Concordia Press, 1968, p. 113)

Our world needed something similar 2000 years ago. It needed God to step out of the "picture frame". It needed God to step out of heaven and join us in this world. And God did what was needed! He came down.

He entered our world by the coming of God the Son, Jesus Christ. Fully God, He became also fully man. The Lord walked among us, He talked with us, He ate with us. The Lord loved us, taught us, and healed us. He died for us and He saved us.

Because Jesus was fully human, people commonly missed seeing that He was also fully divine. 100% God and 100% man. Even the 12 Disciples didn't fully understand---lots of questions and doubts.

And so one day---the day we celebrate today, Transfiguration Day---Christ clearly revealed His divinity to the apostles. He took them up on Mt. Tabor and took the inner circle---Peter, James, and John---all the way to the top with Him. And there His divinity was revealed as the Uncreated Light of God shone through Him. He was always divine, but on this day it was more clearly revealed. Hear how St. Matthew describes it in today's gospel reading, In Matthew 17: 1-2---" And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light." St. Peter, one of the three eyewitnesses, describes it in today's epistle reading, in II Peter 1: 16-18---"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was

borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’, we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

On this day we are now celebrating, Transfiguration Day, Jesus Christ’s full deity was revealed. Christ was glorified.

But an even greater and more profound glorification of Christ was still to come. And that glorification was getting closer every day.

As Christ and the Apostles came down from the Mount of Transfiguration Christ told them to keep the Transfiguration secret until after His Resurrection. And, of course, resurrection can only happen if there first is a death. His suffering and death would happen soon. As Christ told the Disciples on their way down the mountain, in Matthew 17:9-12---“And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, ‘Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead.’ And the disciples asked him, ‘Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?’ He replied, ‘Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands.’” The Son of man would soon suffer, as soon as He arrived in Jerusalem.

And in Christ’s sufferings, that greater glorification would happen. A glorification even greater than the one in the Transfiguration we celebrate today.

This later glorification was in many ways different than the Transfiguration. The glorification in the Transfiguration was all about light and brightness. The upcoming glorification took place in darkness, very deep darkness. It began on Holy Thursday at the Last Supper, the first Holy Eucharist.

We read about how it began in John 13. A very low point was reached that night as one of the beloved 12 betrayed His Lord. Judas was as deeply loved by Jesus as were the other disciples---yet Judas turned on Him. Hear about it in John 13: 26-31---“So when He had dipped the morsel, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’ Now no one at the table knew why He had said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the feast’; or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; *and it was dark*. When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of man glorified, and in Him God is glorified.’”

Judas takes the morsel from the Holy Supper and then he goes out to betray Jesus. All is dark, all is sad, all is tragic---and Christ says as darkness descends-----“Now is the Son of man glorified.”

This glorification of Christ wasn’t brightness and light like the one we celebrate today on Transfiguration Day. This glorification took place in darkness as the Son of God was betrayed and on His way to arrest, trial, and execution. In the midst of all this horror, Jesus says, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and in Him God is glorified.”

Jesus is glorified in betrayal and death, in the cross. Jesus is glorified...not in light this time, but in the darkness.

The Lord was betrayed that Thursday evening and that led to His arrest, trial, flogging, and crucifixion---an even greater glorification than the one on Transfiguration Day. It

revealed His divinity, not through visible light this time, but through visible love.

For it was done for us voluntarily out of love. There is an icon that now is hanging on the back wall of our nave. During the first part of Holy Week, it's up here in front for the evening Bridegroom services. On that icon, Christ is shown just before His crucifixion. He stands solemnly with the crown of thorns on His head, and with His hands bound with a rope. A prisoner about to be executed. But if you look closely at His hands in the icon you'll see that the rope isn't even tied. It's just loosely looped around His wrists. The iconographic tradition shows this in the Bridegroom icon to make a symbolic point---- Christ went to the cross voluntarily. No rope could have bound Him, no violence could have forced Him up on the cross. He submitted to all of His sufferings voluntarily, out of love for all mankind (including those killing Him).

It is Christ's sufferings that most clearly reveal His glory and divinity and love. The cross shows Him to truly be King. Because a true king loves his subjects. St. John Chrysostom wrote, "I call Him king because I see Him crucified, for it is appropriate for a king to die for His subjects." (Quoted in On The Tree of the Cross, Fr. Matthew Baker, Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2016, p. 161)

We are Christians. We are those who see God's glory, God's power, God's Kingship, in that man hanging on a cross. We believe He is the Lord....and we know He is because of how He suffered for us.

Today we celebrate an earlier glorification of Christ when He revealed His divinity on the mountain to the Apostles. And we also remember the even more glorious glorification not long later when He revealed His divinity on the cross.

Let us always love Him, follow Him, live for Him, and worship Him.

