



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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THE LIFE OF JESUS

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matthew 17

~ **Brent Russell** ~

26TH FEBRUARY 2006

- Today we **celebrate the transfiguration** of Christ
- As we **come towards Easter** this is one of the events that points to the **divinity, holiness** and **eternal nature** of the Christ
- **It is in this event that we understand that Jesus is God himself, that Jesus is the one from God set apart and that Jesus lives forever**
- I remember some years ago finding a **big fat green caterpillar** on my lemon tree in my garden
- and rather than kill as I normally would, I wanted to see what the worm would become
- So I put it in a **shoebox** with some **leaves** and within two days it had turned itself into a **chrysalis**
- And there like a child developing in it's mothers womb one of the splendours of nature took place
- **About two weeks later I came home to hear something in the box**
- And there inside was a **massive black and yellow butterfly** which I set free to go and lay it's eggs on someone else's tree
- If you remember anything of your early school science the word we use is **metamorphosis**
- **It means to change form, from one thing to something completely other**
- And this exactly the **Greek word** used for the transfiguration
- **Jesus is literally metamorphosised before his disciples eyes**
- And as with the butterfly being the true reality of what the worm is
- **So the metamorphosis of Jesus reveals the reality of the divine Christ hidden behind the human Jesus**

- This event of the transfiguration reveals that the human Jesus is really the divine Christ, the Son of God
- **Metamorphosis is when the worm become a butterfly**
- **The tadpole becomes the frog**
- **The larvae becomes a dragonfly**
- **And when Clarke Kent becomes superman**
- **And this really is a superhero story in every way**
- **I hope I am not being flippant by saying this**
- I watched **superman** on eTv some weeks back, what a laugh
- But I see the new one is coming out soon but the original look so OLD
- There has been the remake of **Batman, Spiderman, the Hulk and V for Vendetta**
- **And we love superhero stories**
- because in them someone who **seems ordinary** in so many ways is **revealed to be someone who is able to do things that we cannot**
- And most of people around the character are **oblivious** normally to his powers
- The ordinary reporter Clarke Kent who is a **bumbling, clumsy guy** is finally revealed to be the **extraordinary superhero**
- Able to see through **walls, fly** above the clouds and able to do amazing **feats of strength**
- **And it is only a select few who get to see and understand the transformation from zero to hero**
- **And here in the transfiguration Jesus reveals himself to those closest to Him**
- **Peter, James and John** are his inner circle of close friends
- **And they and the other 9 have suspected for many months that something is different about this man – and they have had moments of great clarity**
- They have seen him **heal with great power**
- They have heard the **wonder of the wisdom that he teaches**
- They have seen him able to **drive out evil spirits**
- And they have even seen the **wind and the waves** come under His power

- **But now they see the real Jesus metamorphosized and there is no longer any question at all that they have faced the Son of God**
- Like **Moses** on the top of the **mountain top in Exodus 33**, they have seen the fullness of glory of God himself as He passes
- Here Peter, James and John see the **fullness of God in Jesus** as the majesty and splendour of the deity of Christ is revealed to them
- **A preview of the resurrected Christ in all his power and glory**
- **This is like the superhero taking off his outer clothes and revealing the truth of the power inside**
- **We know well that God never does anything without good reason**
- **And as with everything that He does there is a purpose to this event**
- **He transfigures Jesus to make a statement for us to understand after the resurrection**
- **And so in time as Peter, James and John reveal the transfiguration to the other disciples after Jesus death and resurrection what they understand is a statement from God about Jesus**
- **So what we have here is a announcement from God in a visual way**
- **Like the burning bush for Moses**
- **Like the visions of Ezekiel**
- **God displays a multimedia presentation on the holiness of Christ**
- **And the announcement from God is threefold**
 - **I revealed myself through the law of Moses and through the Prophets**
 - **I have also revealed myself through my son Jesus in whom I am well pleased**
 - **There will be only one – Jesus**

I REVEALED MYSELF THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES AND THROUGH THE PROPHETS

- **It is one thing to see Jesus transfigured, His face and clothes shining like the sun**
- **But I imagine it is the sudden appearance of Moses and Elijah that traumatises Peter**
- **Dear Peter who tries to steer Jesus away from the cross**
- **Dear Peter who claims "I will never deny you"**
- **Dear Peter who now offers to set up three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah**
- **Mark's account tells us that Peter did not know what he was saying, so scared he was babbling**
- **And what God is reminding us about again is that he has revealed himself through the law and the prophets, the two major segments of the OT**
 - **The law as given in the first five books from Moses**
 - **And the books of the Prophets as symbolized by Elijah surely the greatest prophet of God who ever lived**
- **As much as some parts of these OT scriptures are sometimes hard to read, we do not discount them**
- **They where and are and will always remain part of God's revelation to us**
- **And so these two greats of the faith representing the two major sections of the Jewish scriptures are presented with Jesus**
- **In the sermon on the mount that we studied last week Jesus himself reminds us about this truth: Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them"**
- **Just because we have Jesus does not mean we throw away the OT**
- **It does not mean we discount the law as contained in the 10 commandments and Leviticus**
- **It does mean that we may ignore the power of the prophetic writings of any of the prophets of God**
- **Everything in the OT has pointed towards the events of these last days of Jesus life**
- **The revelation of God in the law and the prophets was always pointing towards the fullness of the revelation in Jesus**
 - **There are shadows of Jesus in the Passover lamb**
 - **Images of Him in the Levitical priesthood**
 - **Patterns of Him in the life of Joseph**
- **Everything in the OT has educated, instructed and prepared humanity for the moment of the revelation of Jesus to the world**
- **And so in placing Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus God is affirming the revelation of past times**

I HAVE ALSO REVEALED MYSELF THROUGH MY SON JESUS IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED

- **The fact that Jesus is with these two greats of the faith is God acknowledging that in Jesus He has continued to reveal himself to us**
- In **new, but similar** ways God has continued and **is continuing** to make himself known through Christ as he has in the past
- Hebrews 1 echoes this sentiment: **Hebrews 1:1-2** "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*"

- **And this is God's pleasure in this revelation**
- **He uses the identical words that he used at Jesus baptism three years prior "This is my son whom I love and in Him I am well pleased"**
- The Jewish nation has always understood that the **scriptures of the OT has been God's way of showing himself to us**
- He has used the scriptures to **tell them about his nature**
- Like a **pen-friend** in a distant land writes about himself in letters
- God has **shared with Israel** in the scriptures His character
 - Eternal
 - All powerful
 - All knowing
 - Holy
 - Righteous
 - Compassionate
 - Loving
 - Forgiving
- **We could talk forever about God's character as revealed in the OT**
- **The OT was the way God has chosen to show himself to the world**
- **To draw back the curtain of holiness and allow us to peer through to glimpse his glory**
- **In so much as he has used the law and the prophets to share with us His eternal loving and compassionate nature over many centuries,**
- **by presenting Jesus alongside Moses and Elijah, God is demonstrating that he has continued the work of revelation in Jesus**
- **Three generations of God's revelation to us made known in Glory and splendour on the side of the mountain**

THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE – JESUS

- **As with every good superhero story**
- **The tale ends with only one hero remaining standing and he takes into his arms the heroine**
- **And the screen darkens to soul stirring music and we know that they lived happily ever after**
- **And without being trite or trivial this is a true superhero story in every sense of the idea**
- **On the slopes of the mountain the clouds disappear and the three disciples, Peter, James and John find themselves alone with Jesus**

- **Intimidated and confused by the vision of Moses and Elijah**
- **Terrified by the thundering voice of God**
- **They now look up and see no one except Jesus**
- **And it is this line in the scriptures more than any other that is central to our faith**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- Our church letterhead states that we as a church are **Christ Centred**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- **It is what we will each experience when we have our own mountain top experiences of the true Christ**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- **It is the truth of how we live our lives striving to please only one**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- **It is the truth that there one Lord**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- **It is the truth that there is one way to the father**
- *"No one except Jesus"*
- Peter one of the three witnesses to the transfiguration writes this line later in **Acts 4:12** *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*
- **1 Timothy 2:5** *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"*
- It is in this glorious appearance that we understand something of What Jesus taught to Philip
- **John 14:9** Jesus answered: *"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. "*
- **There is one full and complete revelation of God and He is Jesus**
- **We have the OT of the law and the prophets – but they where pointers to the one complete and perfect revelation of God – Jesus himself**

- In this incredible spiritual event that happens on the mountain top God is revealing a story
- It is a story of a God who has chosen to show himself to the humble creations he made
- It is a story that the revelation has had three chapters each a unique witness to wonder of God himself
- **Law, Prophets and Christ**
- **But above all else It is a story that in the end there is only one**
- **Jesus is the first and the last**
- **Jesus is the A and the Z**
- **Jesus is the beginning and the end**
- **It is Jesus that will remain standing when all else has passed away**
- **This is a superhero story**
- **This is one whom many thought simply a man being revealed for what he is something incredible and out of the ordinary**
- **Colossians 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"**
- **And in this event there no doubting this truth**
- **And in the end the hero has won the battle**
 - **He has overcome evil**
 - **paid for sin**
 - **ransomed many**
 - **and promised resurrection to those who believe in Him**
- **This is a superhero story and He has come to claim his bride the church**
- **And the glorious story continues: they lived happily ever after**
- **And so as we come to the Table where we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus**
- **It is a reminder that this was not just a man**
- **But God in the flesh**
- **The final and full revelation of almighty God**
- **And in this meal we remember that Jesus will come again to claim his church**