

## Title: “Mind-Blowing”

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Luke 9:28-36

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**Service Readings:** Exodus 34:29-35, Luke 9:28-36

*The transfiguration of Jesus is mind-blowing because it describes a glory that is ours, a glory that is promised to us through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior!*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Pastor Stephen Preus, from a church in Iowa once wrote an article that reflected on how Luther viewed the transfiguration of Jesus. His article began in this way:

To consider Christ's glorious Transfiguration on its own is eye-opening; to hear how Luther describes this glory as *yours* nearly bursts the eyes from their sockets, bringing hope to the Christian heart. (<https://lutheranreformation.org/theology/luther-on-the-transfiguration/>)

To say that the transfiguration was eye-opening is probably an understatement, especially for the disciples that were witnessing it, but to describe it as *our* glory is not just eye-bursting but mind-blowing. And could we even say, sacrilegious? Even if it doesn't rise to *that* level, it sure seems to me that it meets the criteria of the current “me culture.” To somehow shift the focus of an event that was all about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit onto ourselves just seems... wrong! It seems like a perfect example of the illness that society suffers from today: selfishness and self-centeredness. So how could it be *Luther* that would have made such a claim? Our very own Luther? That just seems impossible! But that is exactly what he says! He writes:

<quote> The resurrection of the dead and the future glory and brightness of *our* bodies are shown. For this was something very remarkable, that Christ was transfigured while yet in the mortal body, which was subject to suffering. What then shall it be, when mortality shall have been swallowed up, and nothing shall remain but immortality and glory? <End quote> ([https://books.google.com/books/about/Luther\\_s\\_Explanatory\\_Notes\\_on\\_the\\_Gospel.html?id=iVpIAAAAYAAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/Luther_s_Explanatory_Notes_on_the_Gospel.html?id=iVpIAAAAYAAJ))

Luther ties the transfiguration directly to *us*, but not to the “immediate us,” or the “sinful us” but to the “future us,” the one that is raised from the dead. Our resurrected bodies will have the same immortal glory as the Lord's. Why? Because Jesus was crucified and was raised from the dead. But it is not *just* because he was crucified and raised from the dead, but also because he allows us to share in his death *and his resurrection!* Luther claims that our hope in our own glory is tied *directly* to Jesus' glory; it is a glory that he shares with us. And so, when Jesus is transfigured on the mountain, it becomes a foretaste of what we will experience in the world to come. So, this is not about *me*, after all, but about Jesus. The future glory and brightness of *our* bodies is shown because Jesus is in us. It is *his* glory that shines through us.

Now *that* is mind-blowing!

But let's back up just a moment because Luther talks about Christ being transfigured while still in a mortal body – a body that was subject to suffering; it is a point worth exploring. We have to start a few verses back from our gospel passage. Starting in verse 18, Jesus asks his disciples how the crowds identify him. They reply with John the Baptist or Elijah, but then Jesus asks Peter what *he* thinks. He replies, "God's Messiah." Immediately after this we pick up in verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. <sup>22</sup> And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

OK, easy connection there. The disciples were probably thinking to themselves "I'm sorry for you, Jesus, but I'm relieved it's not me!" But here is where it becomes very personal and where it begins to tie us to the transfiguration that follows. After Jesus talks about his own suffering he says this:

<sup>23</sup> ... "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it... <sup>26</sup> Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Can you imagine what the disciples were thinking after *that*? It is not good enough to just follow Jesus, he was asking them to suffer and even die for him! And Jesus' message was not limited to just those twelve but to the whole Christian church. We, too must take up the cross of suffering and even death in Christ's name. And so, after telling them these things, is there little wonder that Jesus led them out of the city and up the mountain where they could bear witness to his transfiguration? Starting in verse 28:

<sup>28</sup> About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup> Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. <sup>31</sup> They spoke about his departure,<sup>[a]</sup> which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Thoughts of their call to suffer and die for Jesus were undoubtably still in their minds; how could they not be? But here before them was their Messiah in human form being transfigured and radiating in heavenly glory? *This* is what waited for them on the other side of their suffering and eventual death! Eternal life in glorious splendor! The proof was undeniable for there was Moses and there was Elijah! They were alive so there *must* be life after an earthly death! And if there is life, that means that death has somehow been defeated. And if death has been defeated, then *sin* has also been defeated. And if *sin* has been defeated then *someone* defeated it! There, in front of them was that someone; there, in front of them, stood the hope that they could attach their faith to! In all its splendor and glory! How this must have strengthened the faith of these disciples! It gave meaning to the future suffering they would endure in Jesus' name.

Mind-blowing, isn't it?

And so, tonight I invite you to walk up the mountain. Leave the busyness of the city, the busyness of your daily life behind and walk up the mountain to pray. Just as the disciples took their own worries along, so too should you. Take it all – your sins, your stresses, all of it. Put it all in a backpack and journey up the mountain as Jesus did so you too can find quietness and an opportunity to pray. The goal is not for a mountaintop experience but to make time for Jesus to do for you what he did for his disciples.

He wants to remind you that the Son of Man suffered and was rejected. That he was crucified, died, and was buried. And that all of this was done voluntarily as appeasement for your sins.

And he wants to remind you that he has allowed for you to suffer, too. Maybe even unto death. That following him means suffering with and for him. That following him means sacrifice.

And he wants to connect with you on a human level. He wants you to know that he can relate to your struggles and your pains. That he *understands and even shares* in your suffering.

But even more than all that, he wants to send the Holy Spirit to work in your heart and increase your faith so that you continue to place your hope in him, alone. He wants you to know that our suffering and death have meaning, and that there is life after this one. And he wants you to know in the resurrection of *your body* will be all the glory and brightness of Jesus our Savior.

Mind-blowing, isn't it?  
Maybe a better question might be this:  
Heart changing, isn't it?

Please pray with me.

“Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. <sup>11</sup> Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. <sup>12</sup> Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. <sup>13</sup> And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

1 Chronicles 29:10b-13

Amen.