

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

WE ARE IN THE SPOTLIGHT OF CHRIST'S MERCY

Luke 9:28-43

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Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

28 Now about eight days after these saying Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son"; he is my only child. 39 Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It

convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. 40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” 41 Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” 42 While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

DIAGNOSIS: WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE SAYING

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *You Don't Know What You're Talking About*

A common form of verbal abuse is to say to someone you are in disagreement with, “You don't know what you are talking about.” The person who says that presumes to know what the other person has learned, experienced, or felt. The other person, in other words, does not matter. They are of no importance. The only thing that matters to the person who was verbally abusive is him- or herself. That view of “only me matters” is the curved-inward view of all people. Everyone wants to be right, to be better than the other person, to be first, or to have the spotlight. The need to be right is reinforced by how people are always being measured, judged, reviewed in their jobs, and criticized. People are always being judged because we live under the system of law.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *They Weren't Listening*

Peter lived under the law like everyone else, and so he wanted to have his place in the spotlight. The spotlight that he saw opportunity to step into was the radiance of Jesus' transfigured face and his dazzling white clothes. He saw Moses and Elijah

appear in glory and thought that maybe he could be included in that spotlight of Jesus. He wanted, because of his inward-curved focus, to have that glory, to have the light of being right, better than others, and, why, even look good to God. But he was not listening to the conversation of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. They were talking about Jesus' departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Knowing the end of the story, that accomplishment was his death on a cross and his resurrection from the dead.) The conversation of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah was about the new way to be right with God-the way of faith in Jesus who died and rose for all people. The old way of being right, of abusing others, of being better than others, was fading away. That is, the way of the law was being replaced-as in put again in its proper place. Peter, as all people do, trusted the place the spotlight put him in. People listen to the system of measuring, judging, critiquing, because they trust that system to determine that they are in God's spotlight, that they deserve to get eternal life.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *But They Could Not* Listening to the system to determine that people get eternal life is to go against God telling us to listen to Jesus. God offers Jesus as the person to listen to for the way to eternal life. "But they could not." They could not listen to Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah about departing. They wanted to stay in the spotlight, in the way of looking good as measured by the law. But the law does not give eternal life. The law cannot cure the son possessed by a demon. The law cannot cure anyone of being possessed by the desire to be measured as the way to look good to God and so get eternal life. To trust the law's measurement and then not listen to God's offer of Jesus, is to reject Jesus and his way of departure that leads to eternal life. Not trusting Jesus, not listening to God, leaves all people "faithless and perverse." To be faithless is how the law

judges us. Being faithless, according to the law, means no one gets eternal life. We are left possessed by death. All people have tried to measure up according to the law, “but they could not.”

PROGNOSIS: WE SAY NOTHING UNTIL CHRIST IS RISEN

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *God Said, “This is My Son”*

Jesus departed from the spotlight by dying on a cross. He took everyone’s place that the law had assigned them-to death. So Jesus fulfilled the law’s judgment that all people should die. Jesus did not change the law one bit, but completely suffered what the law determined all people should suffer-the loss of life with God forever.

But then God raised Jesus from the dead! God made the new judgment that because Jesus fulfilled the law’s demands and judgment for our sake, therefore Jesus gets new life! Not only does Jesus get new life, but because Jesus died for all people, all people also get new life-resurrection and life with God forever. The spotlight did shine on Jesus there on the mountain, but the spotlight showed that Jesus was the person to listen to because Jesus promised life with God to those who trusted his judgment of them.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) – *We Listen to Jesus*

Those who trust Jesus’ judgment that they are right to God, (in God’s spotlight, that they are the best to God because of Jesus’ death), then they actually are right to God, in God’s spotlight, and receive eternal life. That is our transfiguration-from law to gospel. Trusting Jesus’ judgment means the judgment of the law is replaced, placed back into its proper place of preserving and protecting people from each other, from each other’s verbal judgments and abuse and condemnations. No longer does the

measure and critique of others have the power to put people in or out of God's spotlight that shines on those who get eternal life. God's spotlight shines only on those who are trusting Christ.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *We Follow Jesus*

Now that we are in God's spotlight of Jesus, we have confidence that we no longer need all those other ways of measuring, judging, and critiquing others to put us in the spotlight, or to make ourselves look good, or to prove we are better than others. Our inward-curved view is no longer used. Instead, we use Jesus' view from the cross to look at each other. The view from the cross, instead of measuring others and demanding that they meet certain standards, the view from the cross gives people their measurement of being right with God, of being loved by God, and of being given God's mercy. Instead of measuring others' looks, accomplishments, clothing, skin color, sexual orientation, or how important their job is or how well educated they are, we give others love, mercy, prayer, kindness, patience, and peace. We also use the system of the law to keep people protected from each other, intervening to stop people's verbal abuse, judgments, and measurements. We use the law to insist that people be treated respectfully. Jesus has measured us by his cross and rising. That is what we trust and follow in our lives.