

The Transfiguration of Our Lord Matthew 17:1-9

Moses spoke with God face to face. (Exodus 33:11) This Hebrew phrase “face to face” means there's an intimacy there like between husband and wife or between close friends like King David and Jonathan. God spoke with Adam this way. God talked with Moses this way. In fact, Moses was the last Old Testament prophet God spoke to in this way. (Deuteronomy 34:10)

Moses wanted more than anything to see God's face. You know what happened next. God hid Moses in the cleft of a rock and passed by and only let Moses see his back. (Ex 33) God said to Moses, “Man shall not see Me and live.” (Exodus 33:20) Even though Moses didn't see God's face, his face shone when he spent time with God on Mount Sinai. It was so bad, it scared the people of God and Moses had to wear a veil. He reflected a measure of God's glory.

We see a similar thing in today's Gospel, but there's a huge difference. Just like Moses, Jesus' face shone with light. Unlike Moses, however, who only reflected the glory of God, Jesus is the source of the light. Jesus is God! As Saint John says in the Revelation (of Jesus Christ) concerning New Jerusalem, “The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” (Rev 21:23) We see a glimpse of Jesus' glory.

God says that man cannot look on the face of God and live. We see in Jesus that God made a way for man to see the face of God and live. Jesus just gives us a glimpse. Were He to show His glory fully, the disciples, crowds, and religious leaders would have been consumed by His majesty! This is what we call the humiliation of Jesus. He didn't always fully use or show His divine powers and majesty.

Jesus is fully God and fully Man. He is 100% God and 100% Man. Yet He is one Person. There's not a divine Jesus and a human Jesus, there's only one Jesus. Here's how the Athanasian Creed confesses this truth:

But it is necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.

He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age:

Perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity.

One, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God;

One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

I know that was a long quote. When you talk about a difficult subject like the divinity and humanity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, it helps to use our creeds that spell it out so precisely. Pretty much all the errors and heresies that have arisen in the church deal with who Jesus is. On a side note, Jesus' question to his Apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" is the most important question ever asked.

Jesus is fully God and fully man. Paul says, "In [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Col 2:9)

God has certain attributes:

God is Good: "The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made.

God is all-knowing: "O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. (Ps 139:1-4)

God is present everywhere: “Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? Declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? Declares the LORD” (Jer 23:24)

Mankind is not Good in and of itself. Mankind’s knowledge is limited. Mankind is bound to time and space. But Jesus is Good and all-knowing and present everywhere even though man cannot do these things.

Man dies. “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.” (Ps 103:15-16)

Man weeps. “Jesus wept” over His friend Lazarus dying. (Jn 11:35)

Man becomes weary. Jesus was weary when He sat by Jacob’s well that served the Samaritans. (Jn 4)

God cannot die or weep or become weary. But Jesus became weary, wept, and died on the cross.

The attributes of God and man are shared completely in Jesus.

This is why we can say that Mary is the mother of God!

This is why we can say God died on the cross!

But ultimately, why is this important for us?

I’d like to focus on two major reasons why the divinity and humanity of Jesus is important for us.

First, it is because you are sinners.

One of God's attributes is Goodness. It is who He is and it defines everything that He creates. He looked around on the 6th day when He was finished and "behold, it was very good!" (Gen 1:31) Man's goodness in the garden was a reflection of God's goodness.

When man sinned in the garden, he lost the goodness that God created him with.

This shows up in all manner of sins against goodness. We make all manner of idols, blaspheme, reject God's Word, reject God's proper authorities, hate, are promiscuous in thought, word, and deed. We lie, gossip, slander, and covet.

This sin must be paid for. Can a mere man pay for your sin?

Consider the great cloud hanging over our nation since January 22, 1973. More than 63 million babies have been killed in the womb. Babies are killed for convenience and out of fear and out of promiscuity. Many have their hands dirty from the sin of abortion, but don't think your hands are clean if you haven't participated directly in the sin of abortion.

If you have sex outside of marriage, you are complicit in the sin of abortion. The sexual revolution attempts to remove the product of the marital union from the union itself even using abortion as birth control. If you have been a champion of no fault divorce, you are complicit in the sin of abortion. The breakdown of the family from no fault divorce provides no safety net for those who have been promiscuous outside the protection of marriage. If you have placed career over family, you are complicit in the sin of abortion. How many women have bought into the promise of career first and family second and found out the hard way that God's order is different. If you delay marriage and children for a career, neither are guaranteed later. If you vote for someone like Biden who is hell bent on destroying children, you are complicit in the sin of abortion. How long must our country suffer under this holocaust of murder before we realize we are only harming ourselves?

If you have big sin, you must have a big savior. If a mere man dies on the cross for your sin, you are doomed. However, if God dies on the cross for your sin...

I don't care how big your sin is. I don't care how bloody your hands are. Jesus' work on the cross for your sin is bigger. You are covered by the blood of God! Your sin is atoned for! You are free!

If your old man haunts you with your sin, remember the transfiguration and the cross.

If Satan accuses you in your conscious with your sin, remember the transfiguration and the cross.

If others mock you with your sin, remember the transfiguration and the cross.

A Man died for you on the cross. A man who is God. Your sin is covered!

And that Man and God is here with you today in His Supper.

This is the second reason the divinity and humanity of Jesus is so important for you.

When the birth of Jesus is announced by the angels, they declare to Joseph in a dream that Mary is pregnant with God, who is Immanuel which means God is with us! (Mt 1:18-25)

God is not with us in some abstract way. He is with us personally in the man Jesus Christ.

A man can only be in one place at one time! But Jesus is not just a man; He is the great I Am! He can be everywhere at once. And wherever He is in His divinity, He is there in His humanity. You cannot separate the two! Ever since the incarnation Jesus is both God and Man forever more!

But Jesus tells us *how* He is with us. It's not in your hearts or your imagination; it's in the concrete ways that Jesus has set up for our benefit.

Where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, He promises to be there...

In person! (Mt 18:20)

This is the church. Whenever two or more gather around the apostle's teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer, you have the church!

Where baptism is done by Christ's command and His Word is taught, Jesus promises to be there....

In person! (Mt 28:19-20)

This is also the church.

Jesus promises you that the bread is His body and the wine is His body and blood. (Mt 26, Mk 14, Lk 22. 1 Cor 10, 11)

This happens in the church.

If Jesus were a mere man, He could not be present everywhere. But He is no mere man! He is both God and man!

Whenever you go to church, remember the transfiguration. Whenever you participate in the Lord's Supper, remember the transfiguration.

There's a reason we sing the Song of Simeon, also known as the Nunc Dimittis, after the Lord's Supper. Just as Simeon held Jesus in his arms, we hold Jesus in our hands!

Jesus not only forgives your sins with His work on the cross, but He joins Himself to you in His Supper so that you might have strength for the journey.

God the Father says to listen to Jesus.

Right now you don't see Him face to face. You see Him with your other senses. The sense of hearing, and touch, and taste, and smell. You hear Him in His Word and preaching. You touch and taste and smell Him in His Supper.

Now you see in a mirror dimly. Now you see in part.

When you pass from death into life eternal, you will see Jesus face to face! You will confess along with Job:

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
Yet in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27)

Oh what a great day that will be!
In Jesus' name. Amen.