

Rev. Anthony T. Bertram

JESUS' GLORIOUS EXODUS PRAYER

Luke 9:28-36; Epiphany Last C-Transfiguration; March 1-2, 2025

Why did Jesus take Peter, James, and John up the mountain? I think most of us would say to be “transfigured” before them, to change in appearance from an ordinary looking man into the glorious Son of God from heaven. Today we celebrate the Transfiguration of Our Lord. Jesus’ change in appearance is the primary focus of both Matthew’s and Mark’s Transfiguration accounts.

But how does Luke begin his account? **Now about eight days after these sayings [Jesus] took with Him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the appearance of His face was altered, and His clothing became dazzling white.** Luke says that the reason Jesus went up the mountain was to pray, and while He was praying, He was transfigured.

Luke is the only Evangelist who tells us what Jesus talked about with Moses and Elijah on that mountain. I am confident that the topic of their conversation is directly related to what Jesus was praying about. **And behold, two men were talking with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.** The word translated as “departure” is *exodus* (ἐξοδος), the name of the second book of the Bible. The “exodus” Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem was not an escape from slavery in Egypt, but His death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus had been praying about His upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection.

My focus today is on how Jesus prayed as He looked ahead to His suffering and death, even as His glory of being God’s Son was revealed in His Transfiguration. The way Jesus prayed is the way we need to pray in anticipation of our sufferings, deaths, and resurrection. Jesus’ life sets the pattern for the Christian’s life. What I mean by this is that what Jesus went through in His life is what we will go through in ours. Jesus came from heaven to earth to take our place so we on this earth can take His place in heaven. God became man without sin, so sinful man could regain the righteousness of God. Jesus was carrying out God’s plan to save us.

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Two months ago on the First Sunday after the Epiphany we celebrated the Baptism of Our Lord. Jesus was baptized with a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We follow that pattern in our lives; we are baptized into Christ to share in His work of salvation. God sent His heavenly Son to be the Son of Man so we, the sons and daughters of our earthly parents, can become the children of God. Just as God declared Jesus to be His beloved Son at His baptism, when we are baptized into Christ, we are declared to be God's beloved children. Our lives as Christians follow the pattern that Jesus set for us.

This brings us back to Jesus' "**exodus,**" **His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.** Jesus prayed in anticipation of His suffering, death, and resurrection. Christians must follow the same pattern in their praying. Before going any further, I want to note this was not the only time Jesus prayed leading up to His suffering and death. Prayer for Jesus was not a one-time thing but a way of life, and so should prayer be for all Christians.

From the Transfiguration until Jesus' Passion Luke gives examples of how we should pray. Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer, which in Luke's version ends with **and lead us not into temptation.** Temptation is a major theme in Jesus' teaching leading up to and during His Passion. On the way to Jerusalem for the last time Jesus taught the parable of the persistent widow. Luke introduces it with the comment: **that [Jesus'] disciples ought always to pray and not lose heart** (18:1f.). Then, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14), sinners are taught to pray for God's mercy in Jesus Christ because God justifies sinners for Jesus' sake.

Jesus' teaching during Holy Week focused on our need to pray in the face of the world's temptations and opposition to faith in Him. "**Stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man**" (21:36). (Already at the Transfiguration the disciples were found sleeping.) Jesus reinforced this warning in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation,**" and when He found His disciples again sleeping, Jesus reiterated, "**Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation**" (22:40, 46).

As Jesus was facing His coming suffering and death, He went up on the mountain to pray. How did God answer His prayer? Jesus was transfigured before His disciples with the glory that was always His, though it was invisible to them until then. That glory would be shown again at His resurrection from the dead. Faced with the task of saving all creation from sin and death, Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven, and the answer to His prayers was His Transfiguration, a reminder of what the outcome of that struggle would be.

Before seeing Jesus' Passion, Peter, James, and John got to see Jesus in glory. At His Transfiguration they heard Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah about the exodus He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem, His suffering, death, and resurrection, even while shining in the light of God's glory. These two things – suffering and glory – seem to be contradictory, but they are not. The one, suffering and death, leads to the other, eternal life in glory. Jesus set the pattern for us to follow in faith.

We can't see Jesus' glory except through God's Word, which is the foundation of our faith. We believe that what happened to Jesus will also happen to us, His disciples. He suffered, died, and rose for us in glory, forgiving our sins and saving us from death, so when we suffer and die, we will also rise with Him in glory to live forever. We will be transfigured like Jesus. We will share in His glory. As the Father said to Jesus at His baptism and His Transfiguration, **"This is My Son,"** He said to us at our baptisms and will say to us at our resurrections.

Our exodus, our departure, has not yet come, but we, like Jesus, know that it is coming. Until then, we pray like Jesus did, and we do so with the full hope that God's answer will be our transfigurations. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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