# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Glorious Transformation”**

**Mark 9:2-8**

 **February 28, 2021**

Last Sunday, Pastor McLane preached on a passage at the end of Mark chapter 8 in which Jesus told his disciples that he would soon suffer many terrible things, that he would be killed, but that three days later he would rise from the dead. This look into the future greatly disturbed the disciples, so much so that Peter took Jesus aside and reprimanded him for saying such things. The disciples’ view of life with Jesus was close companionship with Jesus and with one another, learning from Jesus as he taught them, and being present when he displayed the miraculous power of God. Suffering, loss, grief and death were not part of the picture for them, and to hear Jesus speak of these things was hard for them. And so it is for us.

We would like to be able to live the Christian life enjoying the benefits and blessings of being God’s children, and so we do. But, in that life there is also hardship and struggle and pain. Indeed, sometimes the adversity and the suffering feels overwhelming and we wonder where the good things have gone.

In less than a week we lost three beloved members of our church family: Margaret Dammarell, Marvin Peterson and Cal Kautz. Individually, many of us have experienced other losses. In the past month, my step-mother died, and our nephew and his wife, who live in Spokane and with whom Lauri and I are close, lost their baby in the twelfth week of pregnancy. Where is the good news of the gospel that Jesus came to proclaim in the midst of these harsh realities?

Immediately after Mark records the story of Jesus’ telling of his coming suffering and death, he narrates one of the most amazing and glorious events in Jesus’ life, an event that helps you and me to put into perspective the losses and hurts that are a part of our experience. I invite you to turn with me to Mark 9:2-8

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.” Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them.

Having been told that Jesus was going to suffer and die, Peter, James and John are given a look behind the curtain, so to speak. The reality that Jesus had told them about and which they would soon experience for themselves, the reality of suffering and death, has already been swallowed up by the glory of Jesus Christ. Death is real, but it will not be victorious – it will not be able to keep us from the love of God that is ours in Jesus Christ. Death stings us with its pain of loss, but it is a sting that we will experience for only a relatively short period of time. For we will be gloriously transformed. This human body that is subject to illness, disease, corruption and death will be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and it will become a heavenly body.

On the mountain, the appearance of Jesus is transformed. His clothing becomes dazzling white and, the gospel of Matthew tells us, his face begins to shine like the sun. Peter, James and John see the inner nature of Jesus revealed in his outward form. As John will later write in his gospel, “We beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only Son of the Father.” And we, who by faith in Christ have become united with him, will one day share in that glory. On that day both our outward appearance and our inward self will be glorious transformed as we will be resurrected to eternal life.

Our dear loved ones and friends who have died in Christ have gone to be with the Lord. I have no doubt that the event which greeted them, as they slipped out of time into eternity, was seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. At death they came face to face with Jesus, and they saw a face ablaze with the glory of God, a face so full of love and grace that the cares and concerns of their past life faded into nothing when compared to this new, eternal reality. And, so it will for you and for me. In our glorious transformation, we will love and be loved in ways that we can only imagine.

Fanny Crosby, who wrote over 9,000 Christian songs and poems, lived most of her life in blindness. She often said that the first thing she would see, when her blindness was healed in heaven, would be her Savior’s face. When you feel like the cares and concerns of your life are bringing you down. When you look around and see hurt and misery. When you grieve the loss of someone important to you. Imagine Jesus on the mountain, gloriously transformed, imagine yourself one day, gloriously transformed, and repeat to yourself the words of Fanny Crosby, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. Watching and waiting; looking above. Filled with his goodness; lost in his love.”