

“Good to be _____.” (Fill in the Blank)

Matthew 17:1-9

February 23, 2020 † Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf

Good to be _____? What word would you use to fill in the blank? Here! Immediately I say that word. I think it's because of the Transfiguration Gospel and the hymn 315 "How Good Lord to Be Here." But then I reflect on other possible words: loved, chosen, hugged, together, ready, surprised, remembered, thankful, and Christ-like. Christ-like I picked up in my devotional reading. I did not use the word transformed.

The dictionary tells us the meaning of the word Transfiguration: a) change in form or appearance; b) an exalting, glorifying, or spiritual change. Transfigured means to give a new and typically exalted or spiritual appearance to; transform outwardly and for the better. Who comes to my mind is Saul meeting Christ Jesus on the road to Damascus, transformed for the better changed his name to Paul. Also, those who attend meetings of NA, AA, OA, Alan-on lives of addition transformed to lives of recovery. I recall St. David's spiritual retreats at Luther Inn Wildwood in October. Leaders and invited members and non-members gathered to study God's Word, pray, sing, play and share around a campfire (we brought wood and the metal pit). Carol loved the scent of smoke and delayed washing her retreat attire for a week. She reflected long on the afterglow of the retreats. ELCA youth gatherings lifted up our spirits and the experiences were transforming. One way I captured places of inspiration is buying place mats. Visiting Israel I bought a place mat of Mt. Carmel where the Prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a test of who is the God of Israel. Another place mat where I did not visit is Mt. Tabor the site of the Transfiguration.

Place mats became worship bulletins for Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving at my previous church. They displayed not only art work, but songs, prayers and scripture on the other blank side would be the worship bulletin. I encouraged worshippers to take them home and use them at meal times. One significant moment at Thanksgiving, our family gathered with the matriarch †Lenore living with Alzheimer's. We started singing “This is my Father's World” and to my listening ears...to our astonishment, Lenore was singing and did all the

verses and then quiet. We were transformed! All things are possible with God.

Jesus, Peter, brothers James and John gathered on top of the mountain. Jesus transfigured into brightness! Then Moses and Elijah appeared talking to Jesus who is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. Peter speaks offering hospitality. A bright cloud covers their place and a voice said, "This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." Listen to him!" Hearing the voice, the disciples dropped to the ground afraid. Jesus touched them and said, "Get up and don't be afraid." They rise only to see Jesus. Down the mountain, Jesus instructed them to tell no one what had happen till after the son of man had been raised from death. I remembered this line from a reading "We are the result of what God did on Easter!" This Transfiguration proclamation is the result of what God did on Easter!

James Slone Coffin writes in "Credo," Jesus is both a mirror to our humanity and a window to Divinity, a window revealing as much of God as is given mortal eyes to see. When Christians see Christ empowering the weak, scorning the powerful, healing the wounded, and judging their tormentors, we are seeing transparently the power of God at work. What is finally important is not that Christ is God-like, but that God is Christ-like. God is like Christ. That's what we need to know isn't it? Then we know how to pray - "through Jesus Christ our Lord" who gives us the right and confidence to pray the way we do."

In closing using John Calvin's prayer on Hebrews 12:3 let us pray : Grant Almighty God, since you have appeared in the person of your only begotten Son and have revealed in him your glory made visible; and since you show us the same Christ through the window of the gospel: grant that I, fixing my eyes on him, may not go astray, nor be led here and there after evil lies, the misleading of Satan and the allurements of the world. Instead may I continue firm in the obedience of faith and persevere in it through the whole course of my life, until I am at last transformed into the image of your eternal glory, which now in part shines in me through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.