

2-25-24

Sermon: Real Change

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9, CTW Psalm 22:23-31

Hymns: 114, 73, 147

Theme: It's interesting, that so often, when different folks try to interpret the "Real Jesus", the "Real Jesus" quite often comes off looking a lot like them! But for us to limit the Real Jesus to the finite, sinful, prejudiced typecast of me or you or anyone else, is to do great abuse to the image of the One True God. Paul tells us that we are "to be conformed to the likeness of" Jesus Christ...it's not the other way around. So, how in the world do we go about doing that?

I. Introduction: What would the "Real Jesus" look like to you?

One day, Jesus took Peter and James and John with Him up onto a high mountain, and "There he was transfigured before them."

A. The Greek word "metamor-pho-thay" is translated as 'transfigured'.

But our understanding of the English word—metamorphosis—as a change or transformation, can be misleading.

In all actuality, the transfiguration of Jesus' face and clothing was not a change into something new, but rather an uncovering of Who Jesus really is!

Peter, James and John witnessed, if only for a moment, **the glory of God** revealed in the Son. This was the true Jesus.

B. There is a lot of talk these days in theological circles as to—"Who is the Real Jesus?"

Few, if any, folks will dispute the fact that a man named Jesus did indeed walk this earth 2,000 years ago, and through the work of 'outside sources', that is, unbiased sources outside of the Bible—

like Jewish historians from that time--we know it to be fact that Jesus was indeed crucified under the watch of Pontius Pilate. And much of the historicity of the Book of Acts is also backed up by other reliable sources as well.

II. So there can be little doubt that there was a Real Jesus...the question that many are asking is Who IS The Real Jesus?

This is probably the same thing that the folks who were living during Jesus' time on earth were asking as well—including the disciples.

A. In the chapter before this morning's Lesson Jesus asked His disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

They came up with a number of answers. Look at **Mark 8:29**:

Then Jesus asked "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Well, Peter was correct...

...but Peter still did not understand exactly what that meant...

...because...a couple of verses later when Jesus predicts His death...we read:

"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!'"

To which Jesus replied: "Get behind me Satan...you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

B. It's interesting, that so often, when different folks try to interpret the Real Jesus.....the Real Jesus quite often comes off looking a lot like them!

Now, that's not too bad in one sense, because God did indeed become one of us in Jesus Christ...

...but for us to limit the Real Jesus to the finite, sinful, prejudiced typecast of me or you or anyone else...is to do great abuse to the image of the One True God.

Paul tells us that we are "to be conformed to the likeness of" Jesus Christ...it's not the other way around.

III. So, how in the world do we go about being conformed to the likeness of God?

A. Peter tells us that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

Peter spent a lot of time with Jesus.

Bit by bit and piece by piece...through God's divine power and grace Peter grew and grew in his knowledge and understanding of Christ.

Eventually, Peter became so conformed to the image of Christ that he was martyred for his faith.

B. So the first thing we need to do is to spend as much time with Jesus as is possible.

That's how we get to know someone.

That's how we build a relationship, and that's how we come to love the one we are in relationship with more and more as time passes...

...by spending time with the other person...

...by getting to know and understand the other person...

...by experiencing day to day life with the other person...

So, How much time do YOU spend with Jesus?

C. The frequency of occurrence of the following has a direct correlation to our knowledge of Jesus:

How often do we pray?

Do we study the Scriptures?

Do we come to Bible study?

Do we attend a Sunday school class?

Do we come to worship, and only miss when we absolutely have to?

Do we come to the Lord's Table every time the invitation is extended?

As Evangelical Christians, we believe that Communion is a means of grace.

When we come to the Table we are being nourished for our spiritual journey.

When we come to the Table the Real Presence of the Risen Christ is there with us...

...not that the bread and juice actually somehow become the flesh and blood of Christ...

...but Christ's Real Presence is there in Spirit to forgive us, revive us, awaken us, and even possibly even convert us!

Of course, no one completely understands what happens at the Table, and therefore we do not need to understand everything...

...it is Christ Who offers us His grace at Communion...

...and no one is to be excluded, no matter the age of the person or where that person is on his or her Christian journey.

Therefore, we are to come to the Table expectant and open, and we are to come to the Bible, expectant and open, and to prayer expectant and open, and to Sunday school expectant and open...and to worship expectant and open to God's grace through Jesus Christ...in order that we will come to know Him more fully, and therefore be more and more conformed into His likeness.

Do we do this? Are you open right this minute? For me I have found that it is best to spend some time with my eyes closed, cleaning the cobwebs out of my mind, in order to put full focus on Christ...remember the focus of the lady in the movie War Room? Cast aside anything that conflicts! Now that's focus!

IV. Conclusion: So, what about this passage could change your life?

A. Many of us have had, what we call, mountaintop experiences with Christ.

Maybe it happened at a retreat or a revival. Maybe it happened in the privacy of our own home as we studied the Bible and meditated on God's Truth. Maybe it happens every Sunday!

In our Gospel Lesson for this morning we read of a time when Peter, James and John had a mountaintop experience with Christ.

As Jesus was transfigured before them...as they got a glimpse of the Real Jesus...the divine Jesus...as His face shone like the sun, and as His clothes became light...as Moses and Elijah showed up and began to talk with Christ...Peter came up with a grand idea!

"Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'"

Peter, still misunderstanding his Lord, thought this was it and he was not planning on leaving that mountain.

But this was not "it". There was much work to be done at the bottom of the mountain.

For instance, when Jesus returned from the mountain, there waiting for Him was a man with a son who was possessed by a demon.

The transfiguration, in this exact place, in this way and time...happened only once...but the disciples were to have many, many more mountaintop experiences with Christ.

The same goes for us, and that is a beautiful thing **if we tune in!**

B. Every time we come together and worship we should have a mountaintop experience.

Since worship is a means of grace where we come face to face with the Real Jesus through prayer, music, praise, the Word, baptism and Communion, we can revisit that mountaintop!

When we gather in this place together, brothers and sisters in Christ, **we are the church.**

Which means we are **radically different** from the world around us.

As a matter of fact, to many outsiders, what we do on Sunday morning is foolishness...BUT, you have to **experience it** and be **part of it** to even come close to **'getting it'**.

And it is a journey, just as Peter tells us in **2 Peter 1:19**, that he was an eyewitness of the Real Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration: "...we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place..."

There can be no doubt that the more time we spend with Jesus, the closer we walk to the light, and the more the Real Jesus is revealed to us...in us...and through us!

C. The Church is a sanctuary...a place of refuge and safety where you can be in the warm presence of God.

Every time we worship we are spending time with Jesus because He lifts up the light of His countenance upon us and grants us His

peace...although the world we have come from and the world we will return to **is a dark place.**

Simply put, the more time we spend in the light, the more the Real Jesus is revealed to us, every time we walk out the doors of this church the world should look just a bit different, **and more importantly we should BE different!**

The words of a familiar hymn **summon us** with this truth, and call us to **live into this truth...**and **thus be changed** more and more into the likeness of Christ every moment of every day:

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in his wonderful face,
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light
of his glory and grace.”

May it be so. Amen?