

“Have You Been Changed?”—Mark 9:2-3

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Have You Been Changed?”, is Mark 9:2-3 → *After six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them, and His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

If you were to take a brief inventory of your life is there anything in your life that you would like to change? While such a “loaded question” may be rather “risky” to answer because it challenges your perception of life it also allows you to face those areas of your life which really do need to change. From the desire for change in living conditions and environment to the desire for changing behaviors which are self destructive, most people feel that there are some things which they wish were different about themselves and their life.

In the pursuit of making conscientious changes in one’s life a number of dynamics need to be present. First, admitting that you need to change is essential. Without this recognition there is no need for striving to change. Secondly, a plan of action is very important. Third, you need to be perseverant

in order to accomplish your desired goal. However, for numerous reasons people discover that it's not quite that simple. Life, with all of its influences, struggles and unexpected contingencies can quickly sabotage even the best of intentions to change. Thus, a person feels stuck in many ways and even fights change while desiring it at the same time.

I am here to tell you that you do need to change, that a plan of action has been put in place for you and the perseverance has been provided! In fact, this is the essence of the change which Peter, James and John experienced as they witnessed what we have come to know as the Transfiguration of Jesus recorded in our text.

The most obvious change which took place for those disciples on that mountain is described in verse 3 of our text: *Jesus was transfigured before them, and His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.* The Greek letters for the word “transfigured” make up the word “metamorphosis.” While the meaning which we attach to this word is change from one physical form to another (such as a butterfly), the Greek word simply means “to change.” And while Yahweh is described in the Scriptures as unchangeable, the whole purpose of His working in our lives is to bring about change in us.

The change of Jesus' appearance in the presence of these disciples was

both exciting and disturbing as they caught a glimpse of the heavenly glory of God! In his excitement and fear, Peter suggested that they make the experience last longer by building tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. The experience would indeed last longer but not in the manner in which they imagined. It would constitute changes yet to take place which would really challenge and empower these disciples' faith!

The Transfiguration was meant to reassure us that the LORD looks at change in a unique way! He looks at change in light of His unchangeable and consistent Will for our lives throughout history. The appearance of Moses and Elijah, representing the covenant Yahweh made with His people in the Old Testament Scriptures, was significant at this point in Jesus' journey to bring that old covenant to fulfillment. According to Luke 9:31 they *spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem* by His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. This event gave direction to the itinerary of Jesus and His disciples to finish His work of salvation for us sinners so that great changes could take place in our lives now and forever!

These disciples would soon realize and admit their need for not just a change in their lives but more importantly a change in their hearts. It is very probable that it was the desire for change which attracted them to follow Jesus in the first place. Most nationalistic Jews of Jesus' day were longing for a

change in their circumstances as they felt oppressed by the Roman government. Their hopes for such change were bound up in God's Messiah promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Little did they know what kind of changes were in store for them and how their efforts to make the changes happen would fail horribly as they followed Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus saw much change ahead for His disciples which would cause them a lot of fear as well as blessing!! As they followed Jesus to Jerusalem He told them that changes would take place drastically, quickly and unbelievably. We especially have the record of Peter's reaction when Jesus shared that He would *suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.* (cf. Mark 8:31) Peter pulled Him aside and said, *This shall never happen to You!* (cf. Matthew 16:22) Was Peter going to be the one to make sure such changes would never happen?

Look how things went when Peter tried to make the changes himself. After proclaiming publicly that he would die with Jesus before deserting Him he put forth a good effort. When they came to arrest Jesus Peter was ready with the sword. However, he along with the other disciples fled His presence and deserted Him to die. While watching Jesus' mock trial Peter denied knowing Jesus. Changes needed to take place for Peter, the other disciples and for

you. Peter saw that need when He denied Jesus. Luke 22:61-62 says that upon Peter's denial of Him *the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times."* And he went out and wept *bitterly*. Peter admitted the need for change on his terms, had a plan of action but failed miserably in its implementation. It brought him to admit his need for a change of a different kind through repentance and faith in Christ.

Jesus suffered, died, rose again and ascended into heaven in order to bring about a change—to change your heart which is lost in the helplessness of sin. He took your sin and all your sinful desires, actions and even your good intentions to change, and offered Himself for the punishment which you deserved because of your sin by dying on the cross. These drastic changes which Jesus allowed to happen to Him brought forgiveness of sins for all people! He rose from the dead in order give you the certain hope of eternal life on the Last Day when He will change your *lowly body to be like His glorious body!* (cf. Philippians 3:21) He ascended into heaven so that all of this change in God's plan of action is possible for you.

In Luke 24:49 Jesus gave this promise to His disciples before ascending into heaven: *I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. The power from on high of*

which Jesus was speaking was the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. When they received the Holy Spirit they were given the ability to speak in the languages of the people around them so that they could proclaim the change necessary in every human heart—the need for admitting your sin through repentance and trusting in the Person & Work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life! Once the disciples received the Holy Spirit they realized that the plan of action belonged to Jesus and the perseverance for them to remain faithful to that plan was the work of the Holy Spirit in them!

You have been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit through faith in God's Son Whom He loves. As you listen to Him in the Bible you are able to deal with other changes in your life because of the certainty of God's unchangeable Will for you in Jesus! God gave this promise of the Holy Spirit and changed hearts through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 36:25-27. He said: ***I will** sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols **I will** cleanse you. And **I will** give you a new heart, and a new spirit **I will** put within you. And **I will** remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will** put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules.* It is the work of the Holy Spirit to change you through the Gospel and

the sacraments so that you will have a life-changing influence on others as you proclaim Christ in your life.

As a result of all the changes inaugurated at Jesus' Transfiguration your heart has been changed from selfish, sinful desires to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ! Thus, we look for changes to take place in life not because we're bored and "needed a change," nor because of circumstances, nor because physical cycles of life demand change. Rather, by faith in Jesus Christ we look for changes to take place according to His plan of action.

By faith in Jesus Christ we can also behold the glory of Jesus and experience the Holy Spirit change our hearts and lives as 2 Corinthians 3:18 says: *We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. **For this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit.*** By faith in Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit provides the perseverance for us to live in obedience to God's Word and witness the life-changing affects of His Person and Work upon others! Amen.