

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 19, 2023



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with * are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers
Presiding Minister
Organist
Lector
Parish Administrator
Custodian

All People
The Rev. Bradley Ross
Aaron Carter-Enyi, CAGO
Ted Lockmiller
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Vince Besednjak

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Transfiguration of Our Lord

Today's festival is a bridge between the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle that comes to a close today and the Lent-Easter cycle that begins in several days. On a high mountain Jesus is revealed as God's beloved Son, echoing the words at his baptism. This vision of glory sustains us as Jesus faces his impending death in Jerusalem. We turn this week to Ash Wednesday and our yearly baptismal journey from Lent to Easter. Some churches put aside the alleluia at the conclusion of today's liturgy. This word of joy will be omitted during the penitential season of Lent and will be sung again at Easter.

Prelude

Welcome & Greetings

*Thanksgiving for Baptism

We praise God for the gift of baptism that forever unites us through God's love with one another, and sets us free to serve as disciples for the sake of the world.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness,
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Holy God, fountain of living water,
source of mercy, tender and mighty,
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.
Your steadfast love fills the earth.

Your love flows through water,
satisfying the thirst of all living things,
sustaining life in our communities we call home,
nourishing and delighting us.
We bless you for all the gifts of water surrounding us.
Your love flows through the water of baptism
joined to your life-giving Word:
your well of mercy and cleansing flood,
your sea of deliverance from death into life,
your healing river washing any sin away,
your living water springing up to eternal life.

At Mount Sinai, Moses experienced the presence of God for forty days and forty nights. The “glory of the LORD” settled on the mountain, and on the seventh day God called out to Moses. On the mountain God gave Moses the stone tablets inscribed with the ten commandments.

¹²The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” ¹³So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.”

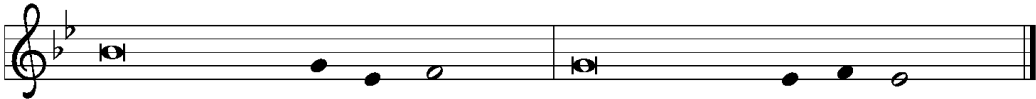
¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Word of God, word of life! **Thanks be to God!**

Psalm

Psalm 99

The bold verses are sung by the congregation using the tone below:



Antiphon: Proclaim the greatness of the LORD; worship upon God’s holy hill. (Ps. 99:9)

¹The LORD is king; let the | people tremble.

The LORD is enthroned upon the cherubim; let | the earth shake.

²**The LORD, | great in Zion,
is high a- | bove all peoples.**

³Let them confess God’s name, which is | great and awesome;
God is the | Holy One.

⁴**O mighty king, lover of justice, you have es- | tablished equity;
you have executed justice and righteous- | ness in Jacob. Antiphon**

⁵Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and fall down be- | fore God's footstool;
God is the | Holy One.

⁶**Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon
your | name, O LORD,**

they called upon you, and you | answered them,

⁷you spoke to them out of the pil- | lar of cloud;
they kept your testimonies and the decree | that you gave them.

⁸**O LORD our God, you answered | them indeed;
you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their | evil deeds.**

⁹Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and worship upon God's | holy hill;
for the LORD our God is the | Holy One. *Antiphon*

Second Lesson

2 Peter 1:16-21

At the transfiguration, God's voice was heard, declaring Jesus to be the beloved Son. By the activity of the Holy Spirit, God's voice continues to be heard through the word of scripture.

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

*Gospel Acclamation



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Gospel

Matthew 17:1-9

Shortly before he enters Jerusalem, where he will be crucified, Jesus is revealed to Peter, James, and John in a mountaintop experience of divine glory called the transfiguration.

The Gospel according to Matthew, the 17th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord!

¹Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *How Good, Lord, to Be Here!*

ELW# 315

*Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Universal God, embolden your whole church as it witnesses to the majesty and mercy of your Son. Move us all to share our stories of your faithfulness and forgiveness, that our lives proclaim your greatness. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Majestic God, continue to dwell with your whole creation, from the tallest mountain peak to the deepest valley. Bless the work of conservation organizations and protect vital habitats. Support the work of disaster relief agencies around the world, including in Turkey and Syria. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Gracious God, give shelter to those lacking safe homes. Spur communities to work for fair housing for all. Protect our neighbors whose dwellings do not keep out dangerous cold or heat; accompany with your touch those who are homebound, sick, or isolated. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Loving God, make our entire Covenant family eager to receive your Word of hope in Christ. Help us recognize Jesus' voice in the needs of our neighbors; make us confident to follow the way of the cross. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Eternal God, receive our thanksgiving for those who have guided us in faithfulness, gathering us as your precious children. With our forebears in faith and all who have hoped in you, teach us to wait with courage until the promised day dawns. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **Amen!**

*Sharing of the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always!
And also with you.

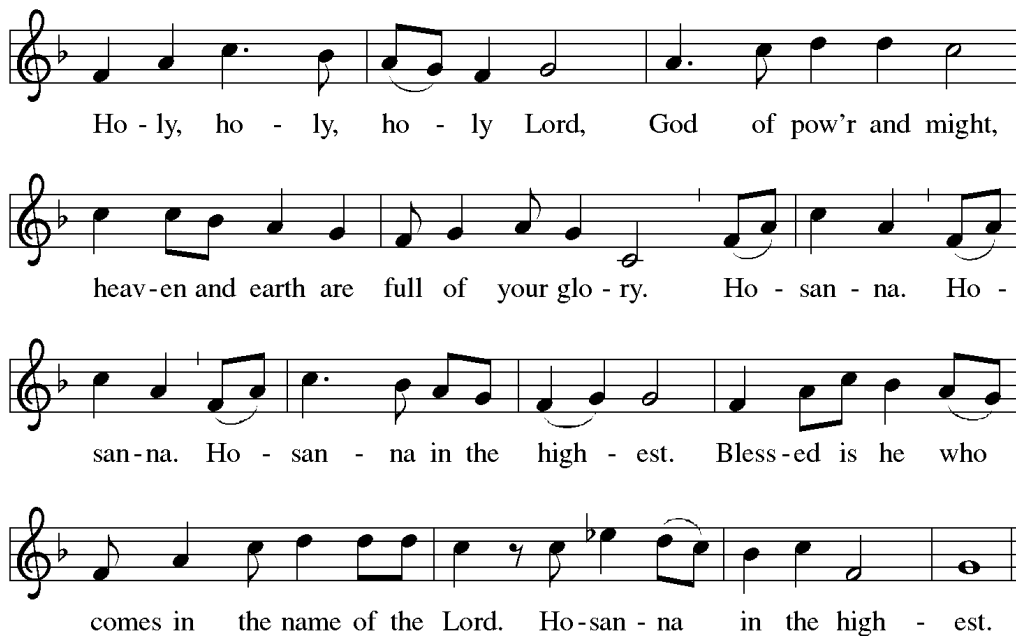
Music Interlude

*Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. Each staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath. The first staff has a double bar line in the middle. The second staff also has a double bar line in the middle. The third and fourth staves are continuous lines of music.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who, sharing our life, lived among us to reveal your glory and love,
that our darkness should give way to your own brilliant light.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Almighty Lord,
 we praise your shining light, your glowing grace.
 From before the earth's foundation,
 you loved us and promised us life forever.

Within the earth's deep struggle,
 we laud your great and glorious might.
 Despite our tears and shortcomings,
 we sing of the gladness of your mercy.

We praise your Son, our Morning Star,
 our treasure dear.
 He is our living Savior who has redeemed us in love.
 He keeps us yours and fails us never—
 today, tomorrow, and every day.

For on the night he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks,
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Holy Spirit, refresh our souls with this heavenly food.
Nourish us as branches of your tree,
and enlighten us with your undying flame.

We sing out to the Father, we ring out to the Son,
we exult in the Holy Spirit.
Empower us in our yearning,
and be for us the end and the beginning,
our purest pleasure, our victorious crown, our never-ending love.
And so, we pray and praise: **Amen!**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,**

now and forever. Amen.

*Invitation to Communion

Glory to God in the highest!

Taste the joy of Christ, our Lord!

Thanks be to God!

Communion

Music Interlude

Prayer after Communion

O Lord, you look upon us in love and refresh our souls
through the gifts of bread and wine.

Send us out, reflecting the light of your grace,
to tell the story of Jesus Christ,
our bright morning star. **Amen!**

*Blessing

Beloved children of God, what came into being in Christ was life,
and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.

The light of Christ ✠ shine on you with grace and mercy
and fill you with joy and peace!

Amen!

*Sending Hymn *Alleluia, Song of Gladness*

ELW #318

*Dismissal

Go in peace, guided by the light of Christ!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Sheena Cameron, Joan Clarke, Gary Edler, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Clare Hanusz, Alex Hohenstein, Dylan King, Elaine Knerem, Jason Lanese, Sara Mendes, Debbie Morris, Phyllis Nemeth, Gary Smith, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Welker, Maud Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family.

General Fund receipts for week ending 2/12/2023: \$1740



Today, immediately following the worship, we invite you to stay and join us as we go over our budget for 2023, as well as hear about the latest updates with ministry here at Covenant.

Also, today, we will have an opportunity for an informal meet-and-greet with our new organist, Aaron Carter-Enyi, and his family. We are glad to have him join us as part of our ministry for Covenant and beyond!



We will gather at 7pm this Wednesday, February 22, at the Lutheran Church of the Master, to begin the journey of Lent together. There will be a time for confession while also hearing God's steadfast mercy. We will also give the opportunity to have ashes placed on our foreheads before receiving the ultimate gift of new life in Communion, remembering that God can still create a masterpiece even from dust.

Lectionary Blog: God on the Mountaintop

I really enjoy this pairing that was chosen for this week's lectionary. We have Moses' mountaintop experience of meeting God juxtaposed with Peter's, James' and John's mountaintop experience of seeing Jesus and hearing from God. Both experiences are noteworthy and deserve serious attention in their own right. But I think this year, I'd like to focus on conversations that happen on the mountains that are just outside of our lectionary texts. I think they help put into fuller context the passages that we are reading this week.

First in Exodus, Moses goes back up the mountain after coming down to tell the people what God has commanded. Mind you, this is the oral instruction that Moses heard and then wrote down (Exodus 24:3-4). The stone tablets will come 40 days later (Exodus 24:12, 31:18). Moses recited the commandments that he heard God speak, wrote them down and then performed a covenant ceremony, sprinkling blood on the people to remind them of their obligations. Then God called Moses back up the mountain—but not alone. Moses went with his brother Aaron, his nephews Nadav and Abihu, and a sort of proto-Sanhedrin of 70 elders. And. They. Saw. God!

Now, humans are frequently frightened when they see angels, let alone God. But in the Hebrew Bible, lots of people see God: Eve and Adam, Abraham, Hagar, Isaiah, Moses and his friends here, to name a few. And here in Exodus, we read specifically that all the assembled leaders saw God and were not harmed. Instead, they enjoyed food and wine with God (Exodus 24:11), sometimes referred to as the Sinai communion.

This is the context of God calling Moses into the cloud of God's presence. God isn't some terrifying, angry mountain God. To be sure, every single one of the assembled children of Israel at the base of the mountain beholds God's glory (!!) as a consuming fire. But before any of that, God has already set out the terms of God's relationship with the people. The people have already agreed to the covenant—twice (3, 7), and God has already shared a meal with the leaders of the community. The Israelite prophets will remember this as the royal wedding where God took the people as God's spouse, complete with marriage contract and festive meal.

The 40-day extended period alone with Moses, as well as the 40 years in the wilderness in this context, can be read metaphorically as a kind of honeymoon, when a beloved leader of God's beloved people spends time learning what God wants and how to live together in love and harmony (Jeremiah 2:1-2). The context of Moses on the mountaintop with God is one of surprisingly deep intimacy and devotion from the God of the universe!

In much the same way, reading the conversations that happen on the mountain of transfiguration help us see the depth of love, devotion and intimacy that Jesus displays. We know that Jesus led a core group of his disciples on a high mountain where he was transfigured before them. And we know that God spoke from the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5). And we know that the disciples were terrified, as anyone would be.

But just as the leaders on Sinai had nothing to fear from a God who only wanted to show the fullness of divine love to them, Jesus' disciples had nothing to fear from the Messiah who would show the lengths that Divine love would go to rescue them. While the disciples were still quaking with fear, Jesus touched them and told them not to be afraid.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them (not for the first time) that he would be killed and raised from the dead. In a moment of clarity, the disciples seem to have finally put together that Jesus was who God said he was: the Beloved Son. They simply ask if things are unfolding in the proper order: wasn't Elijah supposed to return first (Malachi 4:5-6)? Jesus took the opportunity to say that the one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (John the Baptizer) had already come and had been killed. The same would happen to Jesus (Matthew 17:11-13). Jesus would die to save them, and us, from the powers of sin and death.

Twice in these short passages, we have God appearing in a cloud on a mountain. And as neat as shiny clothes and consuming fires are, I think they are beside the point. God shows up, again and again, to enter into relationship with humanity, and to show how far God is willing to go to bring humanity to Godself.

*Cory Driver is the assistant to the bishop for emerging ministers and ministries for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. His book on wilderness spirituality, *Life Unsettled*, is available from Fortress Press.*