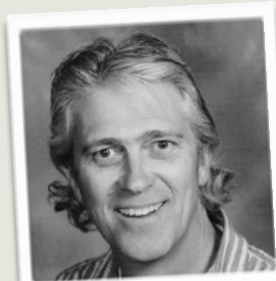


# WORSHIP LIKE YOU MEAN IT!

Transfiguration Sunday; The Last Sunday after Epiphany (Year B) February 11, 2018



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## Lessons

2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2:1-12

Psalm 50:1-6

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3-6

St. Mark 9:2-9

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, the resplendent light of your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts.

Transfigure us by your beloved Son,  
and illumine the world with your image,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

Amen.



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

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## Sermon

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> Amen.

Excuse me — I hope you don't mind, but I need to interrupt our worship service for a few minutes. Please be seated. We'll get back to this hymn in a bit.

This morning we are beginning a eight-week long focus on how and why we worship as Lutherans. It is something that we do from time to time, and we haven't done it for a long while. So for the next few weeks we'll be taking a look, a section or two at a time, at Lutheran worship, how it connects with the history of Christian worship, and how it touches our hearts.

We'll also be doing this during the Adult Forum between worship services. Dr. Nancy Beyer, whom many of you know, has agreed to lead a parallel study during this time. Her first class will be two weeks from today, on February 25<sup>th</sup>. I hope you'll join us for her series.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:7, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:2, Philemon 3; New Revised Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

Through these messages during worship, and with Dr. Beyer's help during Adult Forum, we will focus on how our Lutheran worship practices fit within the historic traditions of the church, and how this enriches worship for all of us.

I want to begin by making two points: the first is that as we begin to understand and appreciate worship in a deeper way, it can have a much more profound impact on our faith. One of my favorite worship stories is about two young children who were playing church out in the back yard. One of them was the pastor and one of them was the assembly. They were making their way through the service, from the beginning to the end. Finally, at the very end, the pastor faced the assembly and made the sign of the cross. The assembly asked, "What does that mean?" The pastor answered, "Oh, the pastor does it every Sunday. It means, 'Some of you go out this door, and some of you go out that door.' "

Now I don't think many of us have that shallow of an understanding of worship, but the truth is: if worship is just the act of doing what we do because that's what we're supposed to do, it can become a cold and rote business. We've all had seasons like that in our lives. Times when we were going through the motions. Reading the words, singing the songs, but not really dialed in to what we are doing, or what it means. When happens, worship becomes more of an obligation than a blessing.

But the more we appreciate what we are doing and why we are doing it, the more chance it has to touch us. When we realize what is intended to take place in each section, it opens up our hearts, and makes it more likely to happen. For instance: this opening hymn that I so rudely interrupted... It has a particular role to play in the service. Think of where your mind was before we began singing. Maybe you spent the last hour struggling to get kids dressed and in the car. Maybe you were engulfed in the morning news, either excited or distressed about something you were hearing. Maybe it was a frustrating drive in today, with bad roads and thoughtless drivers. When we came into this room today, we were in many different places: emotionally, spiritually, even physically.

But then we began to sing together. We found ourselves breathing at the exact same time. Pausing at the exact same time. Focusing on the exact same song, with the exact same words, delivering the exact same message. All together. We may have arrived here as 60 or 80 or 100 separate individuals, but by the end of the hymn, we were experiencing a unity we didn't have when we arrived. We were becoming a community of people, united in our desire to combine our prayer, praise and thanksgiving in a way that is appropriate to the wonder and majesty of our God. When we know this is our intent, and we begin to look for it week after week, we will find that the Gathering Rite with its Opening Hymn is able to do just that, if we are prepared for it, and expecting it to happen.

Which leads me to my second point: expectations. If we expect this to be a rather dull hour with little connection to our daily lives, it probably will be. But if we expect God to honor the promise to be with us whenever we gather around word and sacrament, and if we anticipate that at some point during our hour

together, God will show up, and inspire us — perhaps even dramatically transform us — this is probably what will happen.

Let me give you an example. I'm sure many of you know that last week Elton John announced that he is going to retire from being a touring musician. His final concert tour will include some 300 shows over the next few years. In fact, he plans to perform at the Pepsi Center here in Denver on Thursday, February 7, 2019. Tickets went on sale a week ago on Friday. I checked last night, and there are none left for sale. So ignoring the resale market, many of the people who will be at his concert a year from now have already purchased their tickets. They'll spend the next twelve months thinking about this show, explaining to their friends why they decided to spend an exorbitant amount of money to buy tickets, and basically working themselves into a frenzy about the concert. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, most of them will walk in through the doors of the Pepsi Center expecting to experience one of the most amazing performances they'll ever see.

Their sense of expectancy will almost insure that it happens. I'm sure Elton and his crew will put on a great show — but the expectant attitude of his fans will make it an even more powerful experience.

The same is true for worship. If we come here on a Sunday morning, absolutely certain that God will show up and accomplish something amazing; if we are watching every moment of the hour, at every aspect of our gathering, expecting this to happen, it is much more likely to do so. And when it does, we are much more likely to notice.

This is why I'm glad we're starting this journey on Transfiguration Sunday. Think about what happened on top of that mountain. These three disciples dropped everything and gave their whole lives to Jesus. They followed him around the countryside for three full years!. They saw some amazing sights along the way. Crowds were fed. People were healed. Hearts were touched. Minds were transformed. Everywhere Jesus went, incredible things happened.

And then one day, he invites Peter and James and John to climb a mountain with him. The top of a mountain! The kind of place where God used to meet with Moses — a story that they heard time and time again as they were growing up. Their expectations have been absolutely sky-high. And look what they experience: a glimpse of glory that burns its way into their hearts, and stays with them until the day they die.

Now this is, obviously, a pretty amazing moment. But their sense of expectation allows it to be even more powerful for them. And although it will take them some time to unpack the experience, it will eventually be one of those experiences that shapes them and inspires them for years to come.

Here's the thing: the same Jesus who was transfigured on the mountaintop promises to meet us here. Every Sunday morning. In the word. In the meal. In the absolution. In the singing. In the peace. Every Sunday morning. Jesus promises to

meet us here and, in fact, he does. But if we're not expecting it — if we're not looking for him — we could miss out on it altogether.

So let's work together to understand and appreciate worship to the very best of our ability. And then let's expect amazing things to happen. Let's show up every Sunday morning, eager to throw ourselves into it, and discover that one moment when God will show up for us. That one moment which will make all the difference in the world.

Are you not entirely sure how to make this happen? Well, our hosts have a brochure for you. It includes both some suggestions about how we can begin the process, and some discussion questions that we might find helpful this week.

Here are some ways that we can help ourselves to worship more fully:

- Study the lessons ahead of time, and understand the theme of the day.
- Know what each part of the liturgy intends to accomplish, and look for the ways God is making it happen.
- Be aware of the liturgical church year, and what the church hopes to experience in each season.
- Rest well the night before, and arrive prepared to do your very best at participating.
- Expect God to show up — every Sunday!

Here are a couple ways that we can help our neighbor worship more fully:

- Participate with strength and enthusiasm — not performing, but entering whole-heartedly into every aspect of worship.
- Pay attention to our neighbor's needs — could they use a hand with a child, or with finding their place in the worship folder?
- Help newcomers feel connected — is there someone near you who you don't recognize? Introduce yourself to them. Welcome them to Saint Peter.

Are you ready? Then let's get back to our opening hymn, and sing it for all we're worth.

First Service: O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright! (page 24)

Second Service: Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise (page 32)

David J. Risendal, Pastor

### **Gospel Lesson; English Text** <sup>2</sup>

<sup>9.2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice,

<sup>2</sup> A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at [www.elca.org/Lectionary](http://www.elca.org/Lectionary).

“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”<sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.<sup>3</sup>

### Gospel Lesson; Greek Text:

<sup>9.2</sup> Καὶ μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν μόνους. καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν,<sup>3</sup> καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν, οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι. <sup>4</sup> καὶ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἠλίας σὺν Μωϋσεὶ καὶ ἦσαν συλλαλοῦντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ. <sup>5</sup> καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ ῥάββι, καλὸν ἔστιν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι, καὶ ποιήσωμεν τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωϋσεὶ μίαν καὶ Ἠλίᾳ μίαν. <sup>6</sup> οὐ γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἀποκριθῆ, ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο. <sup>7</sup> καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης οὗτος ἔστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ. <sup>8</sup> καὶ ἐξάπινα περιβλεψάμενοι οὐκέτι οὐδένα εἶδον ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν. <sup>9</sup> Καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους διεστειλάτο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ ἄ εἶδον διηγήσωνται, εἰ μὴ ὅταν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῇ. <sup>4</sup>

### First Lesson; English Text:

<sup>2:1</sup> Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. <sup>3</sup> The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

<sup>4</sup> Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. <sup>5</sup> The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.”

<sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. <sup>7</sup> Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup> Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup> When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” <sup>10</sup> He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” <sup>11</sup> As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. <sup>5</sup>

### Second Lesson; English Text:

<sup>4:3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from

<sup>3</sup> St. Mark 9:2-9, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

<sup>4</sup> St. Mark 9:2-9, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).

<sup>5</sup> 2nd Kings 2:1-12, New Revised Standard Version Bible, *opp. cit.*

seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>

**Second Lesson; Greek Text:**

<sup>4:3</sup> εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον, <sup>4</sup> ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>5</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν. <sup>6</sup> ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν· ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμπει, ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3-6, New Revised Standard Version Bible, *opp. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3-6, The Greek New Testament, *opp. cit.*