

## **Trust God and Embrace the Change**

### **Luke 9:28-36**

#### **Knowledge about vs acquaintance-knowledge**

Let me begin today's sermon with a question. "Have you ever eaten pufferfish?" [ppt] I bet 'no.' As we may know, the pufferfish is one of the most poisonous fish so chances are you would not cook it yourselves even if you were a food daredevil. But in Korea, pufferfish are eaten and I have eaten pufferfish soup several times. It tastes good. Only chefs with a special cooking license can prepare pufferfish dishes. The soup tastes light and clean and the Pufferfish has a uniquely firm texture, so it is very tasty. Some people call the taste of pufferfish, "The Taste of Death" but I highly recommend you try the pufferfish soup if you have a chance to visit Korea. Who wants to try it?

Now, that you know a little more about pufferfish and have heard about the taste of pufferfish soup, would you recommend others try it? Maybe not... because you only know about it, you do not actually know it. There is a difference between 'knowledge about' and 'acquaintance-knowledge.' In this age of the internet, you can know about anything in a second. All you need to do is 'google it' and in a blink of eye, you will find tons of information. However, there is a profound difference between 'knowing about' and 'knowing.' Do we know God? Or do we just know about God? We, Christians, must not only know about God, but also, know God. To know about God, we can google on the internet. If you are more serious about God, you can read the Bible and go to the library and find books about God. There is nothing wrong with trying to know more about God. The limitation of 'knowing about' though is that we still remain observers, maintaining the boundary between ourselves and the object we want to know about.

There is only one way to know God. We need to encounter God. We must meet God, tremble in God's presence and feel the bliss of realizing God's glory. Howard Thurman defines religious experience as "the conscious and direct exposure of the individual to God."<sup>1</sup> Do you know the best way of knowing the taste of watermelon? Having a big bite! Just like this, we need to meet God, feel God, and taste and touch God. We cannot simply remain observers in this religious experience. We are both observers and participants. This immediate experience of the Divine makes us know God and this knowledge of God changes us.

#### **Today is Transfiguration Sunday.**

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. At the heart of the Transfiguration is change. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up on a mountain to pray. At the very moment that Jesus was praying, the appearance of both his face and clothing changes. The Greek word that is used to describe this change was *metamorphosis*. When do we use this word? Do you remember science class talking about butterflies? An ugly wormlike caterpillar changes into a breathtakingly beautiful butterfly and we call this change *metamorphosis*. At this

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<sup>1</sup> The Creative Encounter, 20-21

moment of deep communion with God in prayer, Jesus knew God, the Father, and God knew Jesus as the Son and the very essence of Jesus is revealed.

Howard Thurman said, spiritual disciplines are essential to religious experience because these disciplines “ready” the individual for religious experience. Of course, spiritual disciplines are no guarantor of God’s Presence but they make us wait and ready our mind and the spirit for God’s presence. For Jesus, God was the Creator of life and God breathed through all creation. Jesus could feel the breath of God through all things, through the small sparrow in the air, the lily blossoming on the rocky hillside, through the grass of the field as well as the barren rock in the wilderness. Through the faces of the weary people and even through the craven tax collector. Jesus could feel God breathing through them while he did his ministry during the day. But the most precious time for him was at the close of day. Jesus always found a quiet place for prayer and entered deep communion with God. In his quiet center, Jesus encountered God in the most intimate way and knew God.

We can pray at any time, in any place though we often neglect to. According to a poll, most Christians don't pray regularly. We do pray or ask others to pray for us when we have some issues. Asking for God’s help is important. However, that’s only one dimension of prayer. Changing the outcome through prayer is not the goal for prayer. Mother Teresa said, “Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts.” Prayer is a spiritual discipline that leads us into the quiet center of our being and into communion with God.

If you have somehow neglected prayer, you can restart today. If you regularly pray, that’s wonderful. You can refine this spiritual practice for spiritual growth. As we become more intimately connected with God in prayer, we are changed by God and the divine light of Christ in us will glow in our words and actions.

### **Embrace the Change**

Jesus knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, the way to the cross. Being fully human, Jesus knew the suffering, humiliation and death that lay ahead of him. He would have feared the uncertain future. He might have worried about his disciples who would be left alone. I believe that Jesus brought all those concerns and all that he was to God. God knew Jesus and Jesus knew God. With trust, Jesus fully embraced his destiny. He embraced the change that lay ahead of him to fulfill his calling.

Of course, not all people like change because change always involves risk, uncertainty, and some degree of discomfort. A disciples who accompanied Jesus on the mountain was no different. He saw Jesus in his glory talking with Moses and Elijah about his departure. and said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”. Not understanding what was really happening he tried to align it with what he thought. He didn’t want to be changed, so he unconsciously denied the change that

was coming. He may have thought that he also would have to be transfigured and transformed if Jesus changed. So he wanted to pitch some tents and keep things the same until the winds of change died down. He might have assumed that he could come out of the tent and all would still be the same. Jesus would be the same. He would still be the same. And he could have another nice day. However, having a nice day does not necessarily mean a meaningful day. We, Christians, are not called to live nice days. We are called to live days that matter, days that are meaningful. We are not just called to survive, but we are called to come alive. The only way that we come alive is to discover the inner calling that comes from God.

### **Like a Bollon in the Air...**

Have you ever ridden in a hot air balloon? I have many things on my bucket list and this is one of them. A hot air balloon is an aircraft consisting of a gondola and an envelope, which contains heated air. Flying in the air would be nice but also dangerous. A hot air balloon on the ground is safe; but that is not what it is built for. When the heated air flows into the envelope and when the heated air inside the envelope carries the gondola into the air, it can truly be called a hot air balloon and those inside of it can enjoy the stunning beauty of the land below from a bird's eye view.

In prayer, Jesus Christ knew God, trusted God, and embraced the change. After the transfiguration experience, Jesus embarked on his journey toward Jerusalem... a risky journey but a journey to fulfill his calling.

We are the followers of Jesus Christ. Staying on the ground for our own safety is not an option. Through prayer, come to know our God more deeply and find your calling that makes you alive and sets you on the journey of transformation. With prayer, fill your heart with the life-giving spirit and then, the breath of life, the Holy Spirit will guide your journey.