

**Stop consuming but be consumed by the divine light of Christ!**  
**Matthew 17:1-9**

**Breaking the wall between holy and mundane worlds.**

Today is transfiguration Sunday. According to the gospel of Matthew, Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up on a mountain to pray. And while he was praying, his appearance of face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. At the moment of transfiguration, God has broken the boundary between heaven and earth and showed his divine light of glory through Jesus Christ.

Three disciples could see his glory and the dazzling splendor of the transfiguration. They heard that a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him.” How did three disciples react to amazing experience? There were overcome by fear and awe. Perhaps, their reaction was an inevitable human reaction facing the divine.

When we encounter something really extraordinary, we feel overwhelmed and the feeling of awe and terror make us speechless. [PPT 2] Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? What was your first reaction when you first saw its grandness in person? No words can really describe the beauty of it. [PPT] Have you ever gone whale watching? I have never went whale watching nor do I plan on going because of my terrible sea sickness... but when you first see a whale breaking the surface and jumping into the air, what would be your first reaction? [PPT] If you go on an alligator tour in the Everglades and see for the first time an alligator jumping out of the water to catch chicken meat, what would be your first reaction? [PPT] As we encounter something extraordinary and something great and divine, the usual human reaction is the feeling of awe.

But the feeling of awe is also a very dangerous experience. It means that you are very close to something that you cannot control or domesticate. Imagine that you are going on an alligator boat tour but you are informed that the boat does not have any safety fences on it. Would you then be willing to go on your tour? As you know, I love hiking. Hiking in the Grand Canyon is on my bucket list. Although I love hiking, I would not dare to hike there if there were no hiking trails because it's extremely dangerous no matter how beautiful it looks. We want to distance ourselves from the source of awe in order to protect ourselves. We want to maintain the control of our own experience and life. That is why we prefer to stay behind the guard rails while watching the awesome view of the Grand Canyon.

It's the same with our spiritual experience. Do you want to see the glory of Christ as the disciples saw at the mountain even if that experience can lead you to a completely unexpected life? Are you willing to encounter Christ even if this encounter will challenge your political stances, calling you out from your comfort zone?

No Christian would intentionally avoid opportunities to experience God but at the same time, we don't want God intervening too much into our lives so we create a safe distance from God and unconsciously build a safety wall. That was what the Israelites did in Exodus. They

were terrified when they encountered the presence of God so they asked Moses to mediate between God and them.

Some scholars criticize contemporary Christians for not seeking God, but merely consuming religious belief and religious productions. Christians consume inspirational preaching, devotional books and other spiritual products. While we consume these religious products, we may not really seek God because we are afraid of real encounters with God.

The difference between the mere consumption of spiritual productions and a real encounter with God is clear. Consuming religious products, whatever it is, make us feel good, relieved, motivated, excited and sometimes a bit guilty... but it is not very demanding. It doesn't ask us to racially change our political stance or spending habits. It doesn't demand us to change our consumptive lifestyle. Rather we consume them for our own good as long as we want. We can always change religious products in terms of our own favors. So it is entirely up to our choice and control.

However, encountering God... seeing the divine glory of Christ first hand is the complete opposite. Can we consume God? Can we control God? No. We do not... and cannot merely consume the divine light of Christ. Rather, we are consumed by the divine flame. It consumes our soul. It consumes our Spirit and Body. It consumes everything we have and all of who we are. While we are able to control our lives if we are consumers of religious faith, we cannot control our lives once we see and experience the glory of Christ. The encounter with the transfigured Jesus Christ would transfigure us from the inside out. It is dangerous because we don't know how God would change us. Yes! It is risky because we don't have control so we prefer to have a safe distance from God and stay the same, consuming spiritual products as necessary.

### **Christ Transfigures us.**

But we cannot be the same people as we see the transfiguration of Christ... as we encounter the presence of God. Moses could not be the same person as he encountered the living God in the burning bush. The Samaritan woman could not be the same person after she met Jesus Christ at the well and she became the first evangelist.

John Wesley could not be the same person after he experienced "God's works in his heart" at the Aldersgate. He felt his heart strangely warmed and trusted in Christ alone for salvation." This was his moment of spiritual awakening... a moment of meeting transfigured Christ on first hand. When he met a transfigured Christ first hand, he could not be the same person. When the Anglican church prohibited him from preaching in the church, John Wesley burning with the Holy Spirit could not stay in the church building. The divine flame of the Holy Spirit within him led him to the open field of Bristol and the street corner of London to proclaim the gospel. As he was transfigured by God's grace, he did not just sit and wait for people in the church but proclaimed "the world is my parish" and went out to the world to preach the gospel. We are the living fruit of John Wesley who was transformed by the hands of a transfigured

Christ. There are millions of people whose lives have been changed by encountering a transfigured Christ. And I hope that we are one of them.

### **Prayer, a Way of Listening to God**

**[PPT]** The good news is that the transfigured Christ comes to us and continues to transform our lives. As a voice from the clouds said, “Listen to him,” listen the voice of Jesus Christ who speaks to us now. We have to listen to him.

Listening is not hearing. A musician said, “To listen is an effort, and just to hear is no merit. Even A duck hears also.” To listen, we need to be conscious, intentional, and attentive to God speaking to us. We can listen to God’s voice through reading and meditating the Bible. We can listen God’s voice through preaching, communion and our fellowship with others.

Most of all, we can listen to the voice of Christ when we pray. We often assume that prayer is an act of speaking to God but prayer is primarily an act of listening. It is an act of opening a widow in the safety wall that we have built to protect ourselves from the powerful and uncontrollable movement of the Holy Spirit. And this small act of opening ourselves to Christ transforms us from the inside.

Some of us may feel that our soul has dried out like a completely dried dead wood. Nothing seems to transform us. Can dead wood be transformable? Maybe we once had a fierce passion for Christ but as time goes on, we have lost our zeal and ardor for Christ. **[ppt]** It seems there is nothing left but a small ember of faith that keep us coming to the church. Can we be changed? Can we be new persons like Moses and John Wesley? Yes. We can. But to do so, we need to listen to the voice of Christ and open our small widow to the holy Spirit.

A small ember can reignite a huge fire when the wind flows in. As the life-giving wind from the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, that small ember of faith inside us will reignite a holy flame and it will consume our soul. It will consume our spirits and transfigure us as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

The season of Lent will begin this Wednesday. Lent is a time of cleaning our hearts and removing old ashes of sin. Lent is a time dedicated to our relationship with God, and to listen to his words.

We are doing “Gospel-in-40 days” practice during Lent. Please read the Bible and listen what Jesus Christ speaks to us through the Bible. Pray to talk less and become a better listener. Stop consume religious productions but meet our God.

My brothers and sisters, the time has come. It’s time to meet the dazzling light of Jesus Christ. It’s time to open the window in our heart and make the wind of life flow through. Our Christ is calling us. “Open the door!” Listen to his loving words and open your hearts through prayer. The life-giving wind of the holy Spirit will lead us to our journey of transformation. Amen.