

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany: The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Text: Luke 9:28-36 (v.35): “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him!”

Theme: The Divinity of Jesus

Goal: God Himself reveals that Jesus of Nazareth is His Holy Son.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: It was not easy for the disciples to recognize that the poor man of Nazareth was the Son of God. They were always dreaming and hoping that the Kingdom of David would be restored by the Messiah, with all its splendour and power. Now, a humble man, a carpenter from a small village, came and proclaimed Himself to be the Promised Messiah, the Son of God. What? Is it true? Or is He a false prophet? Shall we believe in Him and follow Him? – Even in spite of the many miracles Jesus performed to confirm that He was God on earth visiting His people, Emmanuel, the disciples were very weak in their faith; and any problem in their or in Jesus’ life was a reason to doubt about His divinity.

I – The disciples

The disciples had ups and downs in their faith. Sometimes they were very excited about Jesus’ power, His words and His deeds.

Sometimes they became really frustrated when He didn’t like publicity and when He, answering their questions, pointed to another Kingdom, far away in heaven, and not to the powerful earthly kingdom they were hoping for. The biggest frustration of the disciples occurred in the Gethsemane Garden, when Jesus was arrested and didn’t react! Peter tried to defend Him with a sword, but He rebuked Peter: “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the

cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11). And then all disciples fled, leaving Jesus by Himself in the hands of the soldiers.

Jesus' divinity was the main reason for what He was arrested by the leaders of the Jewish church. They accused Him before Pontius Pilate: "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God" (John 19:7).

The suffering man on the cross had nothing that someone could say: Look, the Son of God. On the contrary, people mocked Him, saying: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" (Luke 23:35). Even one of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39).

It would have aroused huge emotion to His friends and would have caused a shock to His enemies if Jesus had shown His power coming down from the cross. But it wouldn't have solved the problem of humankind, our eternal problem. He had to suffer and die as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Only the Holy Son of God was able to offer the perfect sacrifice for our sins. And Jesus submitted Himself to death, out of love for each of us.

Even after His resurrection and after the witness of the women who had seen Him, the disciples were not convinced. The complaint of the disciples on their way to Emmaus summarizes the thought of all the disciples: "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people... but we had the hope that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24).

Knowing the weakness of the disciples, Jesus gave them some glimpses of His glory in advance to strengthen them in their faith, as we heard today in the Transfiguration episode. It seems that they didn't need a bigger proof that He was the Son of God, the Holy

Chosen One. But it was not enough and they stumbled in Jesus' humbleness and suffering.

Only after they had seen and they had touched the resurrected Jesus, and after they had received the Holy Spirit, they became really convinced who Jesus was: The Son of God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. John and Peter wrote in their biblical books about the experience they had on the Transfiguration Mountain as a proof and an assurance that He was really the Messiah, the Saviour of all of us! And they witnessed it wherever they went. Peter suffered even martyrdom due to his testimony on Christ.

## II – The Early Church and the Creeds

Many believed in the message of the Apostles and confessed their faith in Jesus, true God and true man. The Christian Church grew fast and spread all over the world. But very soon doubts began to be raised about 'who is Jesus'. Gnosticism said that they had a higher revelation about Jesus. Others denied that Jesus remained true man after His resurrection. Others said that He was only a Prophet, but not true God.

We have to be aware that not all had access to the whole Scripture that time. The Books of the New Testament hadn't been put all together; and the oral tradition was the most common way to pass on the story of Jesus. Some truths were missing, other false truths were added by the oral tradition. It was necessary for the Christian Church to establish the truth against false prophets and against the enemies. What is our faith about Jesus? Who is Jesus?

First, the Apostle's Creed appeared spontaneously as a Confession of the Christian Faith and was used especially by the new converted when they were baptized. – After this, the Nicene Creed was

compiled at a Church Council in 325 AD in the city of Nicaea, (what is now a city in Turkey). It was straight addressed against those who were denying the divinity of Jesus. Therefore we confess: *I believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man... (and so on).* – The Athanasian Creed, which you find in the hymnal (LSB on page 319), says: *We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man...*

Conclusion: These three Creeds are called “Ecumenical Creeds” because all the true Christian Churches accept them as confession of the true faith. In spite of the many struggles and differences among the Christian Church, one truth remains proclaimed by God Himself: “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him!” And John wrote at the end of his Gospel: “These (signs) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have faith in His name” (Joh 20:31). The goal of God’s love is to save everyone by faith in this Jesus, who manifested Himself in such a glorious and magnificent way before His disciples on the Transfiguration Mountain.

This story ends Epiphany Season, when Jesus manifested His glory. This week is the beginning of Lent, with the suffering cycle of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Be strengthened in your faith in the true Christ, the beloved Son of God, to be saved; “listen to Him”, and do not go astray following other so called ‘truths’. By God’s grace, Amen.