

Communion Meditation for DaySpring

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“Transfigured”

Exodus, II Corinthians, Luke

February 22, 2004

When folks from traditions other than Baptist take communion, generally older and more liturgical traditions, something more than memory is set in motion.

The elements are lifted up...

Words of institution are said...

And bread and wine become body and blood.

They believe material stuff is transformed into spiritual stuff. It isn't what it was or maybe it is and it's been injected with life from beyond.

No wonder they take communion so often and so seriously. For plenty of Protestants... especially evangelicals, we're simply rehearsing a story... **“Take, eat, and remember.”** And then we say diminishing things like, **“It's just a symbol.”** The words “just” and “symbol” don't really belong in the same sentence... but it's an Evangelical's way of saying, **“Way too much got made of this.”**

And maybe so... but... having said that... lots of us have suspicioned that we've made too little of it in reaction. We've shrunk it down to only something in our heads... A mental exercise. So... it's power in us is minimal. Nothing objectively over there on the table other than some Welch's and an HEB bakery product.

Nothing to receive but a prompt for a memory.

Nothing happening now...

it's just the history channel.

We're uncomfortable... and not just as protestants... but as folks reared on rationalism and shaped by modernity. We're uncomfortable with things that seem beyond Sir Isaac's laws... Uncomfortable with where the spiritual and material intersect. Things are what they are, so we're uncomfortable with things not being what they are...

Things transformed.

And flesh lit up...

Or humanity animated.

All of our texts today are about this.

Moses doesn't look like himself... when he comes down from the mountain. In the movie... Charleston Heston gets his haired dyed gray up on the mountain... but in the original work, Moses comes down all lit up like the Fourth of July. He is glowing from divine contact.

Jesus glows up on Mount Tabor. Jesus is transfigured. Metamorphosed... Obviously, still himself. Peter, James, and John recognize him... they talk to him. But there on the Mountain there is an intersection, a collision with God's presence. Jesus is enlightened. There is a body but a body pierced with new life.

What are you thinking just now... **“That only happens to folks who inhabit biblical pages.”** Or are you thinking, **“That doesn’t happen and I know so, because Sir Issac said it couldn’t and besides, I’ve never seen it.”**

Have you not, really?

Never seen someone animated... energized?

Never known someone to light up a room?

Never felt your own body react to spiritual things... Light as a feather from a wonderful conversation... or from a moment of love. Have you never felt your body express something you were feeling? Never had an ulcer? Or had your face blush? Or felt energized by a new truth you’ve learned?

It should not surprise us at all that those who are most progressed and advanced on the spiritual journey would manifest that bodily in some way. The *Desert Fathers* report a disciple looking into his Abba’s cell and seeing the old man “like a flame of fire.” Fourteen hundred years later, Nicolas Motovilov describes his spiritual director... **“Imagine in the center of the sun, in the dazzling brilliance of its mid-day rays, the face of a man talking to you.”** (Ware, 128)

I suspect you’ve seen something of that sort in a face or two along the way. And maybe you understood that light as the **“light that enlightens everyone”** (as John wrote). The student saw in his director what Peter, James, and John saw on the Mountain in Jesus. Humanity and Divinity in the same person. The Spirit of God enveloping and completely animating a human being.

The early church fathers loved to talk about this text. They said it pictured for us who Jesus was... the nature of Christ. But they also said, it pictured for us our destiny. And they loved to quote First John. **“Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him.”**

Jesus reveals... not only who God is but who you are.

Son of God, Son of man.

You are clay and breath.

Flesh and spirit, just as Jesus was... and you are.

Fashioned as material and as spiritual in the image of God. Now, to be sure, the image within us all has been obscured. **It’s been veiled.** But it hasn’t been removed or lost. This really is who you are, an amphibious creature. Sharing in two worlds.

Did you know that Flipper was a symbol of Christians in the early church. A dolphin of all things. Because a Dolphin lives in two realms... water and sky. This is who you are. Clay and breath. Human and Divine, child of the earth and of Heaven.

Jesus comes to reopen our creative destiny to us. Jesus opens to us the way of love and in the process the image of God is restored in us... (Clement, 87) Gregory said of Jesus, **“He puts on flesh to save the image within us... He is,”** Gregory wrote, **“The faithful impression of The Pattern, representation of the Father and of humanity’s purpose.”** Wow... The pattern which represents God and humanity.

To see Jesus is to look in the mirror... It’s like we’ve been standing in front of a mirror but the mirror has been veiled. And when we see Jesus... when we begin to follow Jesus and to learn from Jesus and we take Jesus into us, it’s like Jesus takes the veil off. And we see finally who we really are.

Have you ever heard the story of the tiger cub who's mother died at birth and wound up being found and raised by a herd of goats. They taught him goat stuff... what to eat... how to bleat. He was all goat, till one day a tiger came along with some appetite for goat. The herd scattered except for the little tiger cub who just sat there frozen with fear.

The tiger saw him... **"What are you doing here."** The cub shook even more. So the adult tiger carried the cub over to the pond... held it over the water so a reflection could be seen and then the cub knew.

Of course, at first it was odd, thinking of changing... eating meat for lunch rather than grass seemed gross. Until of course he got a taste for that... and for hunting... and roaring and running like he was made too.

The Lord is the Spirit... that's what Paul contends... **So when we turn to the Spirit, then this veil is removed... and we who with unveiled faces are "reflecting" the Lord's glory.** Interesting, the word "reflect" can also be translated "contemplate"... So there's this wonderful double meaning.

On the one hand, as the veil is removed... we reflect God's light... But also, as the veil is removed... we can see and so we contemplate God's glory. Veils hide and they blind... in Christ the veil is lifted and we see... we're conscious. But we also reflect as Paul says, **"ever-increasing glory being transformed into his likeness."**

That's pretty great, huh? Gregory of Nyssa said, **"As we turn (repent) to him we become that which he is himself."** He said that Jesus gives himself to all humanity as a seed... and so we are transformed by his presence within us. Jesus is leaven... living bread. You consume and are consumed. (Ware) Transfigured.

This doesn't happen overnight, of course. Not unless you're Moses and God hands you two tablets made of stone. Your face goes white and your hair white in an instant, for sure. But for most of us, this happens little by little. The changes feel odd... It's like a goat realizing it's really a Tiger and having to change everything. This takes time.

But, it's our destiny. We're constituted this way. To be wise and free, completely free. Never afraid, only loving. (and there's only two things, fear and love.) Completely present and alive. Completely awake and totally compassionate. Celebrating and suffering as God does. This capacity is inside you, this is what you're made of and for.

So there are triggers within you that set off longings for what is immortal. You're predisposed to seek the Divine and to reflect the divine. You're drawn to this...

Jesus makes the invitation clearer and invites us to a way of discovering it. And we know being earthbound will not satisfy. We know intuitively we are more than clay. We understand at some level the goal we find in the simple but magnificent words of scripture... We're moving toward that time **"When God is all, in all."**

John's gospel gives us a glimpse of Jesus before his death just after that first and last supper. It's a picture that is unique and so intimately revealing... praying to God. **"I pray that they may be one, as thou Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."**

He was praying for his disciples...

and for all who would follow.

He was praying for you...

and for your transfiguration... and oneness with God.

And that brings us back to this table. Jesus is the perfect union of material and spirit. He shows us who we are. He is extraordinary as are we. Once spirit inhabits, then nothing is ordinary.

You aren't...

 this moment isn't...

 This bread and cup aren't.

God's presence always changes everything. God's blessing transforms everything.

And so we pray, **“Almighty and compassionate One, would you bless this moment, inhabit it, and this bread and this cup and our hearts? In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”**

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