

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

February 7, 2016

Transfiguration Sunday, Last Epiphany, Year C

**The readings this week:**

- Exodus 34:29-35 ◦ Psalm 99
- 2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2 ◦ Luke 9:28-36, (37-43)



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Some folks just seem vividly alive, almost glowing, and full of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you know someone like this, a person whose life is so well grounded in Christ's grace and love that she or he appears unfazed by the storms of life, radiant in the face of adversity, eyes and heart always fixed on God. Surely this person has dwelt in the presence of the Divine.

These everyday Christians don't live in La-La land. They experience both the hills and valleys of life; they know pain and joy, suffering and sadness, elation and love. Yet no matter what curve ball heads their way, they continually nourish their relationship with the Lord of all Creation. They have seen the glory of God, encountered the wholly Holy, and tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to paint a picture of some otherworldly saint. These folks are simultaneously saint and sinner, very much aware of their brokenness and imperfections, but they keep their eyes on Jesus. They reflect his glory and are transformed into walking witnesses. The more time you spend around a person like this, someone who has been changed and transfigured by the amazing grace of Jesus, the more you see an image of Christ reflected through them.

Ask them how they got this way, and they'll likely not be able to tell you for sure. Instead, they will simply point to Christ as the author and perfecter of their faith, as the one to whom all glory and honor are due. They will take no credit and will probably be embarrassed you even asked.

Remember Mary Magdalene's song "I Don't Know How to Love Him" from the hit musical Jesus Christ Superstar? She sings "I've been changed, yes really changed." Mary was confused, bemused, yet made different by her encounter with Jesus. And so are we.

Moses' face was so radiant from his time with God that the people couldn't bear the brightness and the glory. Peter, James, and John were awestruck by Jesus' transfiguration on the mountaintop. Their lives were forever altered by the experience; they were changed. We can be changed, too, by encountering God deeply and regularly. In fact, I believe that it is impossible to be in deep relationship with God through prayer, worship,

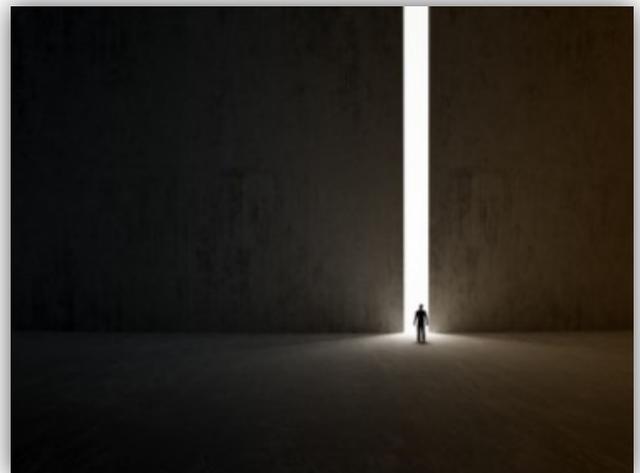
study, service, fellowship, and sharing and not be transfigured.

We may not glow in the dark or sparkle like Edward Cullen in the sunlight, but our individual and corporate lives of faith will be a shining witness to Christ and a reflection of divine love. We will be changed, and in the process we may help others to experience change in their lives, too.

Imagine an entire congregation being transfigured into a powerful and bright witness, a beacon of light and warmth for a weary, cynical world. What if we took Paul's words to the Corinthians to heart: "Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness." What if we become catalysts for change and willing participants in the transfiguration of each other and our entire communities of faith? We have the call. We have the presence of the Spirit. We are baptized. What is to prevent us from becoming something new, something bright and beautiful?

Martin Luther said, "*This life therefore is not righteousness but growth in righteousness; not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not what we shall be but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on; this is not the end but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory but all is being purified.*" We are being changed. Thanks be to God!

~ Rev. Sharron Riessinger Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)



# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: [Exodus 34:29-35](#)

Have you ever caught a glimpse of God's glory? According to this passage, how was Moses changed because of his time spent with God? Why were the people afraid? Why do you think Moses covered his face with a veil in verse 33? Like Moses, why should a glimpse of God's glory change someone forever? Have you ever experienced this? Have you ever been tempted to "veil" the change God has made in you to appease others? Max Lucado says that the human job description can be boiled down to this: Reflect God's glory. What does it mean for you to reflect God's glory? It has been said that many people try to become like God without beholding God. Do you agree? Moses wanted more of God. Does your life look like that of a person who wants more of God? How can you make it so? [Radiant](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 99](#)

What aspects or characteristics of this complete Lord does the psalmist affirm? Study the verbs. How do or should others respond in relation to the exalted Lord? Consider the cause and effects, also the actions and explanations, in this psalm. Why should God's people worship this Lord? Out of reverence for God's unapproachable holiness, the people went through intermediaries to God. Priests such as Moses, Aaron and Samuel were the go-betweens. How did God speak with them? God is terribly awesome and holy, forgiving and punishing. What does that say about the casual God-is-my-buddy approach or the presumptuous God-is-my-bellhop approach we often take in worship and prayer? This psalm invites us to tremble, praise, exalt and worship this Lord. How do you do that each day? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

### Praying Toward Sunday

*You are God's chosen Son, O Lord.  
Please help us listen  
to you.  
Help us open our hearts to your grace.  
Help us believe, help us love.  
We are small and  
we become  
afraid.  
Show us  
your dazzling glory  
hidden in the hum-drum  
of our wondrous, everyday lives.  
Though  
we are sinners,  
make us one with you, and let us  
bring your life, death and resurrection to all  
people.*

~ Copyright © 2013 Anne Osdieck,  
[The Center for Liturgy Sunday Website](#)

*Union with God, which Jesus otherwise holds hidden in the ultimate depths of his soul, now fills up all the chambers of his soul, it embraces his body, drawing it, too, into the blessedness of God's light and God's unity. "His face was like the sun, and his clothes were as radiant as light." ...*

*And just as at the baptism, the voice of the Father confirms here, too, that this poor, praying Jesus, consecrated for suffering, and heroically prepared for the cross, is God's very beloved Son. This then is the meaning of the transfiguration for Jesus himself: in the dark night of earthly hopelessness the light of God shines, a human heart finds in God the power in which turns a dying into a victory and into the redemption of the world.*

-Karl Rahner, sermon for August 6, 1933  
The Great Church Year; via [At The Edge of Enclosure](#), Suzanne Guthrie

## 3rd Reading: [2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2](#)

Recall the questions from the past two weeks, covering chapter 12, as the context for chapter 13. Reread verse 12:31. To what does 31a refer? To what does 31b point? What estimate does this place on the subject of chapter 13? What title would you give to 13:1-3? To 13:4-7? To 13:8-13? What value does Paul place on love in verses 1-3? What in verse 12:10 connects with 13:1? In verses 13:4-7, what are the positive features of love? Review the negative descriptions (the "nots"). How would you state them in positive terms? (For example "not arrogant" could be "respectful") When will the "complete," verse 10, come? Why would a mirror image be dim, verse 12? (Clue: Think old technology) How does verse 13 echo verse 7? In what way might Galatians 5:6 be considered a quick summary of this chapter? [Light on the Lessons](#)

## 4th Reading: [Luke 9:28-36, \(37-43\)](#)

Have you ever gone camping? Think about a bad or good memory of living outside. Why would Jesus take just three disciples? What do you think it means when the passage says that the appearance of His face changed, what was happening? What kind of body will we have in the resurrection if we are going to be like Him? What is significant about what Moses, Elijah and Jesus are talking about? Verse 33, why did Peter want to put up three shelters or tabernacles? [Group Bible Studies](#)