

Interactive lesson

Mirror



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-suit-standing-in-front-of-the-mirror-6764937/>;
credit: Tima Miroshnichenko

What is this person doing?

Can he see his entire self?

Does his reflection reveal this entire person, his character, his love, his soul?

Who can see all of that?

What do you see?

Do you see yourself the way Jesus sees you? Why/why not?

If the world could see you the way Jesus sees you, what would they see?

Do you see Jesus in yourself? Why/why not?

Do others see Jesus in you? Why/why not?

What do you think Jesus looks like?

If you see Jesus in someone else, what does that look like?

Peter said that Jesus was revealed as the son of God on the holy mountain. Why do you think God had to tell Peter and the others on the mountaintop that God loved and was pleased with Jesus?

Holiness can be scary! We see things with our eyes, and interpret them with our head. The Holy Spirit

moves in our hearts, and through faith and grace, God's love and awesomeness are revealed. It overwhelms our senses and can be frightening!

Look at others through the lenses of God's love - not judging for what you deem ought to be, but giving thanks for the gifts from God in the person before you. How do you think that would change how you act toward them?

Let your heart see as Jesus sees, the glory of God revealed in the miracle that is each of us, and let the Holy Spirit work within you for even more.

Gospel lesson

After Jesus had done much countryside ministry and many profound miracles, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus asking for a sign, which He did not perform on command. After they left, Jesus asked the disciples who they said He was, and Simon Peter professed Him to be the Messiah. Jesus told them not to tell anyone that, and began to explain to them he would have to be killed and raised from the dead.

Peter told Him, "God forbid it!"

Jesus replied, "Get behind me, Satan!" and basically told them to refocus on God's will, not on human things. This brings us to today's reading:



Picture cropped from (top half of) painting "The Transfiguration" by Raphael, c. 1520, accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_of_Jesus#/media/File:Transfiguration_Raphael.jpg

Matthew 17:1-9

NRSV

¹Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.

⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."

⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

UMH #454

Message: Super Sunday



background picture and overlay from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/glimpses-of-the-kin-dom/transfiguration-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/transfiguration-sunday-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Awesome God,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may live for Your glory. Amen.

The "Glimpses of the Kin-dom" series concludes today with "Super Sunday":

"Transfiguration Sunday, like Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday, is about the identity of the one we follow. Jesus the Christ is revealed in

glory on the mount of transfiguration.

Like the disciples who were privileged to be with him in that moment, we often miss the significance or the opportunity to praise in our struggle to understand. This day is not about knowledge; it is about faith.

Let us rise to our feet and declare our allegiance to our Lord on this day.”

Remember the pledge of allegiance to the United States? It starts us out pledging to the flag.



picture from MMMS collection

Our national anthem celebrates that star-spangled banner too. But pieces of cloth sewn together can be dismissed pretty easily. So why pledge to a flag?

Because of the country it represents. Our country is pretty incredible compared to some others around the globe. We have rights and freedoms that citizens of some other countries cannot fathom; prosperity such that anyone who wants food can get it and access to clean drinking water is assumed, free of charge.

We are allowed to state our opinions without fear of getting thrown in jail, and every citizen gets a voice in how things are supposed to be run.

Stories abound about the US, and people seek new lives in this country every day. But until they experience it, they do not understand what it means to live in America. Foreigners who visit are often astounded by the freedoms and lifestyle available in this country. When they see this country for what it really is, it can be overwhelming.

And it can inspire them to work for better for their own country once they return. Our country is worth celebrating. So we pledge allegiance even to its flag. But if you think this country is worth celebrating, just wait until you see the kingdom of heaven!



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-peter-confession/>

Jesus wandered around the countryside, ministering to people and talking about Himself as the Son of Man. He put it in terms we could relate to, even as people were awestruck by the miracles He performed.

Yet when Peter proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, the disciple did not understand what that really meant. When Jesus started to explain the Messiah's role, instead of supporting God's plan, Peter tried to support the human persona instead. Jesus rejected the sin, but took action to help Peter understand.

This world is full of sin. We all think we can do good, but we do not have any idea how far short we fall from what God intends for us. God reaches out to show us, but we get overwhelmed quickly by encounters with God because it is so much more than we expect. Direct encounters are limited for our sake.

Because we have limited perspective and strong wants, people often do not live in love. God gave Moses the law to help us live in community with one another, worshipping God. It was good for the people; the psalmist spoke afterward about how the holy and mighty Lord reigns with justice and righteousness.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/moses-sinai/>

Now when Moses was up on Mount Sinai, the people saw God as a devouring fire. Yet Moses was obedient, and entered the cloud for forty days and forty nights.

That timeframe crops up a lot in the Bible. It has been postulated that you can replace a bad habit with a good one if you keep at it for thirty days; biblically, forty marks a significant transition to a new, more holy condition whenever it appears.

From Moses' faithful mountaintop experience came an understanding of how God wanted the people to live, ten commandments which enabled the Israelites to

prosper – laws still in effect today, basic laws of society enabling those that follow them to prosper.

The people responded to God's law by entering into holy covenant, praising and worshipping the Lord.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-transfiguration/>

At the transfiguration, the disciples were dazzled, but not completely overcome at first by the three people. Peter once again responded to support the human persona, offering to make dwellings for Jesus and [these two ancient prophets that had appeared out of nowhere]. He did not get that God was in control, that he (Peter) did not have a clue about what was actually needed, that his assumptions were just getting in the way.

When God spoke, when they were hit with the presence of the Creator, the disciples were completely overcome. Where before Peter spoke to [Jesus as only human], now he understood that Jesus was divine too. Now he stopped speaking against what Jesus said would happen, and accepted that Jesus knew God's plan.

And yet Peter still struggled with faith enough to stand by Jesus's side on the night Jesus was arrested. You can hear him kicking himself about even in his letter to the church that we read today, when

he warns the people, “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but...from God.”

We need to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit, to trust what God tells us. Peter learned a deep faith, to trust in God no matter what. Do any of us have that kind of faith? We have the benefit of already knowing Christ crucified and raised from the dead! We have hindsight of God working in and through the church again and again throughout history!

When will we get it through our thick skulls that we do not have to know all the reasons, that we do not have to take care of all the logistical details ourselves, that God is in control and has covered what matters?



picture from MMMS collection

God is love, and teaches us to live in love instead of in sin. When we seek God, we are blessed with the presence of God within our situation enough to walk us through it, especially for those things that are tough to wrap our heads and hearts around.

So open your heart to trust God. Put aside your assumptions and preconceived notions; think of how Jesus sees you – and those around you. Let the love

of God overwhelm you! Share news of God's love and glory with others in ways they can relate to.

Live in God's love, that others may encounter Christ through you. Help others to notice and to seek God, to have encounters where they are overwhelmed by the Spirit, so that each can choose living with God in love for themselves, for the community, and for God's glory, further establishing God's kingdom on this earth. All praise and glory to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer!

Let us now pledge our allegiance to God with

n Press, 2001), 65.