

**Sermon for February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Transfiguration of our Lord**

**Mark 9:2-9**

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD  
AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) It **never** ceases to amaze me how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. On Tuesday morning I woke up thinking that it seemed as though it was going to be a pretty quiet day at church. I had a **few** people who were supposed to come in for food cards and as far as I knew that was pretty much it. Well, God had other things in mind that day for sure!!!!

About mid-morning I received a call from a woman whom I had talked to more than a year ago regarding her **granddaughter** who, at **that** time, was homeless and living in her car here in Riverside. On Tuesday morning this **same** woman called me again for yet **another** reason. This time the request was to do a graveside service for that **same** granddaughter—*a 34 year old young woman who had died in a Las Vegas motel room from an over dose of heroin*. The **crying** woman at the other end of the phone told me that she would like me to do the service because since she was Lutheran she was hoping to have a Lutheran pastor conduct the service on **Thursday** and since we had talked before..... I asked her to **tell me** about her granddaughter. Among the things she said was that her

granddaughter was **always** very proud of the fact that she had been baptized. That even though her life had not taken a very good path— her **baptism** was the one constant bright spot in her life. So Toni and I worked on putting the **service folder** together **and** on Thursday morning, at 9am, there was a graveside service, at Olivewood cemetery, for a young woman, whose **baptism** had meant so much to her.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) Later that **same** Tuesday afternoon I received a call from the chaplain at Riverside Community Hospital. He said that there was a patient there in the hospital who was requesting a visit from a Lutheran pastor. After gathering some information I went to the hospital to visit the man. I went into the room he was **resting quietly**, he was about **50ish**—as best I could tell, I **called** his name, he **slowly** opened his eyes. He seemed to be rather groggy. Since I had **never** met the man before we began talking. I asked him a **number** of questions to find out more about him. Questions, not the least of which was, *‘why was he requesting a Lutheran pastor to come and see him’*. He told me that he had been **baptized** Lutheran, that he had not gone to church in a number of years, but some of the happiest times of his life was when he and his family had gone to church. He said, he didn’t know why they stopped going—they **just** did. We talked off and on for about an **hour** or so, we **prayed** together, after our **conversation** about God and his faith, I left. But before I did, I told him I would

visit him again if not there in the hospital I would go by to see him at the **convalescent** hospital where he is staying now. By the time I left him his spirits seemed lighter and he was even smiling.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) Please, do not get me wrong, I am **not** telling you these things to make myself sound good. I am telling you these things because God works in and through all of us. My day on Tuesday was **transformed** because of the power of God. Our **lives** are changed because of the power of God. We have the power to transform lives because of our **faith**, the power to transform lives because of **not just believing** in God but because of our **knowing deep down** in our hearts who God is for us, by being a **witness** through our actions of who we are **because** of that deep knowing of God and Jesus Christ.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) God works in each and every one of our lives as we **all** have the opportunity to be the **face of God** for those we meet. To be **kind** to the student at school that the other kids look **down** upon for one reason or another, to look **beyond** ourselves, to step out of the box and offer the gift of kindness to someone on the **street** or someone at the **market** or even someone new here at **church**, to be the **face of God** for someone who does not know God, and there is so much more that we can offer. God has the power to transform our lives each and every day all we need to do is to **look** for the opportunity and to **take** it.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) Just **look** at what happened in our **gospel** reading for this morning. Jesus led 3 of his disciples up a high mountain, apart, by themselves. By the power of God Jesus was **transformed**, changed right before their eyes. His clothes became dazzling white—as white as white can be—then **Elijah** the one who was taken by God into heaven in a whirlwind, and **Moses** whose grave, according to Deut. 34, was **never** found, --they came to **talk** with Jesus. The **next** thing you know, the power of God came in their midst, there was a **cloud**, there was a **voice** which came saying almost the exact same words that Jesus had heard at His baptism, “*This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!*” Right there and then was the power of God to **transform** lives because I am **very** sure that when those disciples went back down that high mountain they were never the same again.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) In our **own** baptism God bestows promises on us which last into eternity. Promises which **go beyond** the grave. Promises which are **so important** for us to hold onto—just ask the grandmother of a 34 year old girl who died too soon.

**GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING.** (long pause) Just ask the gentleman who was ill and depressed, lying in a hospital bed **confessing** that the best time in his life and the best time in the life of his family was when they were going to

church, when they **knew** God, and when they **remembered** the promises which God had made to them.

We are **transformed** by the love and mercy of God, we are **transformed** by God's grace in our lives, each week our bodies are **transformed** by the gift of the Holy Communion—the body and blood of our **precious** Savior Jesus Christ.

This coming week we celebrate Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, the beginning of Jesus' journey to the cross—the **ultimate** example of God's love, the **ultimate** example of how ***God changes everything***. So as we enter into this Lenten journey together may we **stop** to think about **how** God transforms our lives, how we are **better people** because of knowing God, and how we can work **together** to transform the world because of that knowing.

After all, it is not about us—it is **always** about what God is doing in us, through us, and with us. **AMEN**