

11th Sunday of Pentecost

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

This past week we celebrated the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. That great feast which commemorates the Lord's revelation of His divinity to the disciples Peter, James and John on Mount Tabor.

We know the event. How the Lord took His three closest disciples up upon a high mountain and was transfigured before them. How His face shown like the sun and His clothing became whiter than the light. And as the disciples beheld this vision they also saw Moses and Elias talking with Christ bearing witness to the fact that He is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

And then a bright cloud overshadowed the mountain and out of the cloud a voice was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" This cloud and this voice were there to reveal two things. They witnessed to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and they also revealed more fully the Mystery of the Holy Trinity; the cloud mystically showing forth the presence of the Holy Spirit and the voice being that of the Eternal Father.

But what was revealed that day on Mount Tabor was not only the divinity of the Son of God and the mystery of the Holy Trinity – One God in Three Persons. For what was revealed that day was also the high calling of man, the destiny of all human beings, the vision of what a person created in the image and likeness of God is supposed to look like. In Christ, shining with the uncreated glory of God, we see the most perfect revelation of what it is to be a genuine and authentic human being. In Christ we see our own destiny.

You see man was created for the specific purpose of being united to God, to have God dwelling within him, to have the divine light shine forth from him as it did from Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor. This is exactly what the Apostle Peter tells us in His second Epistle, when speaking of the Transfiguration of Christ, he says that we have not only been called to be witnesses to His divine majesty but also to become shares and partakers of His divine nature. So the vocation of the human being is twofold: to see the glory of God and to share in it. And this really is what salvation is all about – this is what we were created for.

Think of it like this. The human being is like a light bulb, created for the specific purpose of receiving power and giving off light, for the specific purpose of being energized to shine in the darkness. But if the light bulb isn't connected to its power source it is basically good for nothing – it has no brightness, it gives off no light. In a similar way, if we human beings are not filled with the electrifying power of the grace of God, then we will remain dull and dark, and ultimately unable to fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

And so, the reason we were created, our very destiny as human beings, is to shine with the glory of God, to be filled with God's grace and power, and to give this light to the world. Remember Christ not only says, "I am the Light of the world", but He also says "you are the light of the world." And He tells us to "let our light so shine before men so that they might see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven."

Now we know that this light and this glory, with which we are to be filled, is nothing other than the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God. Remember how before the Lord ascended Mount Tabor to reveal His divine glory, He told His disciples that some of them would not taste of death until they saw the Kingdom of God come with power. In saying this He was foretelling to them two things. He was alluding to the fact that some of them would see the glory of His Kingdom shining forth from Him on the top of the Mount Tabor. And He was also foretelling to them that some of them (all but Judas Iscariot) would see the glory of His Kingdom shining forth from within themselves through the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

This is why the Lord continually told His disciples to look for the Kingdom of God within them and to anticipate the coming of this Kingdom through the gift of power from on High. That is through the descent of the Holy Spirit, who would abide within them, sanctifying them and empowering them to shine with the grace and light of God so that the Lord's Kingdom could be extended to the very ends of the world.

Now in today's Gospel reading we are given a parable about this Kingdom of God, a parable which we will now consider in relation to what we have just said about man's calling to shine forth with the light of Christ and the grace of God.

In the parable the Lord tells us of a man who owes a great deal of money to a certain king. If you will, this man had not paid his spiritual electric bill for quite some time. And because of this his power was shut off. So the man comes to the king and begs and pleads that he be given a little more time to pay the bill. And to this the king responds very favorably, not by giving the man more time to pay his bill, but by forgiving the entire debt and immediately turning his power back on.

Yet, this man went out and right away found someone who was indebted to him for just a small amount and through him in jail until he pay everything that was owed. And so the king became very angry with the man and delivered him up to the punishment he deserves, his power was shut off and he was given over to the torment of abiding in darkness. And then the Lord says, "And so will My heavenly Father do to you if each one of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Of course the lesson is very straightforward. If God forgives us, we must also forgive each other. If God deals so mercifully with us, we must also deal mercifully with our neighbor. If God give us so much – His grace, His light, His forgiveness, His love, His warmth, His life – so too must we be willing to extend these gifts to our neighbor.

Now let's think for a moment. How many times do we come to the Church indebted to the Lord like the man in today's parable. How many times do we sense that our spiritual

power, our spiritual electricity, has been turned off because we've sinned against God? And how many times have we approached the Lord in repentance through Confession and Communion and the Lord has freely forgiven our debt, immediately turning back on our spiritual power through His divine grace? If we are honest, this happens all the time. Every time we repent of our sins in Confession, and every time we commune of the Holy Mysteries we are once again reenergized and renewed, and our spiritual light bulb again begins to shine with God's light, love, and forgiveness.

Yet how many times do we lose this light because we refuse to let it shine on our neighbor. How many times do we thank the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness and then almost immediately go out as the man in the parable and refuse to forgive or show mercy to our neighbor?

Brothers and sisters, when we do this, the Lord has no choice but to turn our power off, to remove His divine grace from us because we are unwilling to let His light, love, and forgiveness extend through us to others. We cannot have our spiritual light bulbs shine just for ourselves. We cannot receive God's forgiveness without extending it to others. We cannot accept God's love without offering it to our neighbor.

In the Lord's sermon on the mount. He told His disciples that He has not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. And He told them, "You have heard that it was said of old, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" "But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father in Heaven... And so be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

This is the high calling of man, to become perfect as God Himself is perfect, to shine with light as God Himself is light. The man in today's parable was given a taste of this perfection in his life. He received absolute pardon and forgiveness for his great debt before the Lord. All he had to do was pass this same pardon and forgiveness on to his neighbor. Yet he chose not to, he chose instead to carry on with life like nothing had happened, like he had never received this great gift from God.

Now if we think about it, had the king in the parable not forgiven him his debt would the man have been expected to forgive his neighbor. Probably not. It would have been just for him to expect payment to be made, and if it wasn't to take it by force. The problem was that the man had been shown a better way. He had seen the light of God's love and forgiveness and he was supposed to be a carrier of this love. His light was supposed to shine on others.

Now this same thing is true for us, if we hadn't received the grace of God – His light, love, forgiveness, and life – we too would not be expected to pass these gifts on to our neighbor. But like the man in the parable, we have received these things. And we have received them for two reasons: first, so that we could see how good our God is, so that we could witness to His glory and majesty as the disciples on Tabor. And second, so that we could ourselves partake of this glory, this goodness, this kingdom.

Like the Apostles we each have been given a vision of Christ in glory. All of us have become witnesses to the majesty and glory of the Kingdom of God come with power. All of us have become partakers of the divine nature through our baptism. We all have received God's light, love, forgiveness, and warmth. Let us not receive this great gift like the man in today's parable who had his spiritual power shut off because he would not let this light shine on his neighbor, but rather let us let our light so shine before all men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!