

“Being Transformed”
2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4:2

This story may or may not be familiar to you, but in either case, please indulge me: On a particular Sunday a minister preached a particularly powerful and impassioned sermon that left the congregation in awe. The comments after church were very positive as the pastor greeted the members afterward.

On the following Sunday, he preached the same sermon. It had been so good; no one thought it unusual to repeat it until he preached it again for a third Sunday. That’s when some of the elders approached the minister and asked what was going on. “Have you been working too hard?” “Have you been uninspired and unable to write a new sermon?”

“No, no,” said the minister. “It’s just that I have preached hundreds of sermons, all which were prepared with prayer and study of the Scriptures, and yet I have seen no one’s behavior changed. So I’ve decided to preach this same sermon until someone’s life is transformed.”

Today, on this Transfiguration Sunday and Valentine’s Day, I am delivering my 1,360th – 61st sermon from a pulpit since my ordination, and today’s scripture so happens to be the very same that was preached at my ordination over 25 years ago. Through the years it has been my hope that the people of God would respond to the open truth of the gospel with boldness, and that the Spirit of the Lord would remove the veil from our minds, free our hearts, and transform our lives in love.

Just this past week an elder came into my office to have a chat. During the conversation the phrase in our Mission Statement about sharing “God’s transforming love” came up, and he said, “I think we really need to understand what that means.”

The apostle uses the word “being transformed.” If there is one “open statement of the truth” when it comes to being transformed, it is found in the phrase “into the same image,” that is to say, being “in Christ.” When the Spirit is transforming our lives, our actions and attitudes begin to reflect more and more the action and attitudes we see expressed *in Christ*.

Before being *in Christ*, we are like creatures trapped in a cocoon, but by the Spirit we undergo a kind of metamorphosis and emerge to new found freedom. As we turn to the Lord and the veil is removed, to use Paul’s analogy, the mind is freed and the eyes are opened to the glory of the Lord. Our lives mirror his glory as we engage in ministries of mercy and love. Thus the first steps to “being transformed” is to become aware of

- The Spirit’s activity in our midst, calling us and equipping us to boldly love and serve Lord and neighbor by the mercy of God.
- The difficulties and challenges we may face when we commit ourselves to share God’s transforming love in Christ, never losing heart.
- A keen desire to learn and grow in the sight of God.

I realize that this can sound intimidating, all this talk of boldness and being transformed. As the apostle

himself indicated, this mercy and ministry we share is not to cause us to lose heart. Still, we cannot be content with a \$3 God, a Jacuzzi Jesus with whom we feel relaxed and warm and cozy; who will ask little of us and expect even less. An anonymous writer described it this way:

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a warm cup of milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of God to make me love a [stranger] or [work beside a poor person]. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please – with double discount coupons if possible!

This is not the Christ whose image we seek to mirror and whose reconciling ministry we wish to continue. So let us join with the apostle in refusing to falsify God's word, but be transformed by it, one degree, one step, at a time. Let us seek every day to be a little more aware of what the Lord wants us to be and do. Let us continue to commit ourselves to worshiping and learning and caring for one another as we know in our hearts Christ would have us do; otherwise, I may have to preach this sermon again. That would make it number 1,361 – 62!