

The Art of Awakening (Transfiguration)

Old Testament: Exodus 34:29-35 New Testament: Luke 9:28-36

One of life's greatest purposes is **awakening** to who you really are.

Becoming who you were born to be!

So many obstacles stand in the way. For instance:

The most loving parents may still not be able to conceive of who you might become. Even if parents are able to do this, your awakening may happen later in life when they have passed.

Schools are **so focused** on curriculum, classroom management, testing, achievement, results—that even committed, compassionate teachers may be diverted & deflected from inviting students into the beautiful self discovery process.

Then there are the pressures to succeed—To make money!—Get a job—Stay alive.

These and other obstacles may actually become enemies to your soul's growth!
Opponents of your soul's satisfaction!

More often we are like the apostle Paul's vivid description of persons "*looking at a huge landscape through a small rear view mirror.*"

We have to work so hard to adjust! Adapt! Appear normal—whatever normal is!—that we never awaken to who we really are.

Often, we're just afraid.

What a shame!

I knew a man who was a farmer his entire life. He was successful at farming and raising cattle, worked hard, raised a family—but he hated being a farmer.

It was a family duty he believed he had to fulfill, and he despised it.

When he retired, he became a completely different person.

His personality changed almost overnight.

He suddenly became happy, friendly, kind where he had been angry, isolated, joyless.

In the Christian calendar, the Transfiguration is the final day of Epiphany, although it has also been a part of Lent in some Christian traditions.

The Epiphany Season is marked by a story arc that traces the course of Jesus' life and points to trail signs of **spiritual awakening**.

- Epiphany is marked by Jesus' visit to the temple as a 12 year old, there **self-realizing** wisdom well beyond his years.
- Later, when John baptizes him, Jesus awakens to who he really is. "*You are my beloved Son.*" he hears as the waters of the river are poured over him.
- Following his baptism, we read stories of Jesus calling the disciples!
- The wedding at Cana and his participation in God's miracle making process.
- Jesus' initial adventure in interpreting scripture in his hometown synagogue!

Through all, Jesus gradually awakens to who he is—what his mission and great work is going to be.

What he was born for!—according to The Nativity story.

The signs of his complete awakening become clear in The Transfiguration:

His face shines brightly!

His entire being and body are lit up with electric energy.

He's happy!

Filled with joy!

He feels himself to be in the company of his spiritual ancestors and heroes—Moses and Elijah.

He has no fear!

He encourages his disciples to abandon their fears!

There, through the witness of the disciples—Peter, James and John—we find out again that God knows who Jesus is.

This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!

Notice the similarity between this communication from God, and the communication from God at Jesus' baptism:

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

I think these texts are significant.

They are similar to other texts in the Bible in which people like Paul find out who they really are—

—or prophets like Jeremiah or Isaiah find out who they are!

—or people like Samuel, the woman at the well, Mary Magdalene, the Gerasene demoniac, Matthew, Peter, and so many others find out— **as a result of God knowing who they are,**

—which really ignites the self discovery process and leads to each of these people to awaken to who they are!

Have you ever considered the possibility that God knows who you really are?

I mean that in a loving, illuminating way.

Do you realize that God knows you thoroughly and wants to enjoy loving you?

In this regard, one of the most helpful scriptures in the Bible is Psalm 139. Let me read a few lines from this Psalm, to remind you of the wisdom that is available to you there:

LORD, you have probed me.

You know me:

You understand my thoughts from afar.

You sift through my travels and my rest;

With all my ways you are familiar.

Behind and before you encircle me

And rest your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,

Far too lofty for me to reach.

My very self—fearfully and wonderfully made—you know.

What else can this mean but that God knows who you are?

God knows who you need to become!

God can awaken and reawaken you throughout your life's journey.

If—You are receptive!

What I am describing here is not a scientific process.

It's a spiritual process—in which you and I come nearer and nearer to God.

Coming near to God can be quite dangerous to the status quo!

It can be dangerous to your status quo and my status quo

God is a burning bush God!

God is a fiery furnace God!

God is a “take up your own cross” kind of God!

Pay attention!

Take off your shoes.

You are on holy ground!

Holy ground is where you awaken.

Holy Ground is where You begin to ask yourself what a philosopher once asked:

- “What I have truly loved so far in my life?”—Why not commit yourself to it now!
- “What has uplifted my soul?”—Commit yourself to it now!
- “What has driven me into action and delighted me at the same time?”

Whatever!—whomever these are!—they form a flyway by which you may soar upward toward your soul and into God at the same time.

Why not commit yourself to take that flight!

Let your soul rise and carry you like a migrating bird or butterfly beyond yourself into the eternal skies of God.....

Recall how Luke described the moment of transfiguration from the disciples’ vantage point:

“When they were fully awake, they saw his glory”.

They saw Jesus as he really was!

But they had to climb a high mountain to experience this awakening.

You have to embrace difficulty to gain your life!

You must pick up your own cross!

And follow Jesus into God! No one can do it for you!

As a great thinker has observed: *“No one can build you the bridge on which you—and only you—must cross the river of life.”*

Conclusion

We now **move** to the beginning—of the end—of this message.

Harry Potter fans who are here may remember that at Hogwarts School, Minerva McGonagall was Professor of Transfiguration.

And before her, Albus Dumbledore taught *Transfiguration* at Hogwarts.

The possibility of **transfiguration** is an attractive one to the youth of Hogwarts!

And it remains attractive today!

A vision of inner change powering change in the world!

Have you ever heard the spiritual that expresses this longing?

“If He Changed My Name” expresses a hope for deep change many of us have with respect to our own lives!

I told Jesus it would be alright if He changed my name!

I told Jesus it would be alright if He changed my name!

And Jesus told me that I would go hungry if He changed my name...

Jesus knew that he had to climb a high mountain—**which is hard work!**— to experience Transfiguration.

And be changed into the Son of God!

How will each of you respond, in your own life, to the mystery and the beauty of this incandescent spiritual event known as—**Transfiguration!**

Rev Scott Myers, March 10, 2019

The most popular scripture within Christianity is probably John 3:16!

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.”

Although I wonder about the intent of it ending up as a kind of in-your-face combined flashcard/billboard/game show gotcha answer—I think this sentence expresses the idea that God loves unconditionally!

And that when you realize that you are loved unconditionally—by God—or you experience unconditional love from another person—then you have been given the grace of holy space!

In which you may to begin to love yourself unconditionally.... awaken to who you really are.

And you begin to love others unconditionally!

Which helps them to awaken to who they really are.

Doesn't that sum up the joy-filled purpose of life? Amen.

Awakening has to do with the idea that too often our minds are asleep:

a. We are unwilling or afraid to face our own questions and doubts.

b. We want ease and so find a way to “sleep through” any disturbing doubts.

c. There are ways to drug yourself mentally until your mind is sound asleep.

- But then **sorrow** or **need** or **pain** or **yearning** or **love** or even **temptation** wakes one up and one becomes fully alive and fully alert and then and there God becomes vivid, commanding and completely real. **Your need, or pain or love awakens you to God!**

4. Prayer will awaken us to the will of God

I said last week that we can discern God's will in the past, but not the future. Prayer, however, can make us more receptive to what God is making happen.

5. In prayer, you can talk with Jesus, just like Jesus talked with Elijah and Moses.