



**A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
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**The Feast of the Transfiguration
2 August, 2026**

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Good morning and happy observance of the Feast of the Transfiguration! This Feast, which falls on the 6th of August each year is celebrated then because it commemorates the building of the first church on Mount Tabor, believed to be the site of this most holy event. The church was built sometime in the 4th century.

For Anglicans the feast entered our prayerbook in 1561 as a black letter day, meaning, the observance was non-obligatory and there were no special collects or readings. Things remained this way until the 1892 American Prayerbook, in which the Transfiguration became a red-letter day, complete with its own proper collect and readings which we heard this morning.

I had to do a little calendar math on my fingers this week to try and see if I could manage to make January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany, and August 6th an even six months apart. I so wanted that to be true, that these two feast days which remind us that even amid peril, the threats of empire, God's love is radiant. I wanted to imagine these two liturgical events as two equidistant poles in our orbit of the sun. Alas, there is a bit of a gallop in our step. Rather than two symmetrical celestial events, we have a surprise in-breaking of God's glory here in the midst of summer, which is much better than my desire for symmetry, because it is much more the way God does things.

That said, we find a symmetry in the parallelism of the Exodus and Gospel readings. Moses has been to the mountain top to converse with God and is physically changed by his radiant glory. Jesus has done the same, in the presence of three disciples, and they may see for themselves the radiant glory of God's love and faithfulness for all humankind.

As a quick review, Moses travels up the mountaintop twice to receive the tablets containing the Ten Commandments. During his first sojourn, the Israelites grow impatient and lose faith. As a hedge, they fashion the golden calf. Upon his return Moses catches them carrying on in the worship of it. He throws down the first set of tablets and breaks them. Not because of his anger, though how else could he have felt in that moment, but as a signifier that before he had even stepped off the mountain the Israelites had already broken God's Commandments for how they should live as the children of God. The covenant will not hold, or so Moses fears.

He travels up the mountain again and transacts the exact same contract with God. Moses begins to understand the nature of being in relationship with God when he passes before Moses, and utters the



foundational words of the character of God. “God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” Moses bows down in worship and asks for God’s forgiveness of this stiff-necked people, and all is forgiven.

This time, though, God has Moses write the commandments himself, rather than God writing them, demonstrating how important to God it is that the building of this relationship, between God and the people of God, is one of mutual effort. It isn’t as if Moses has been called before the principal and asked to write on the board 100 times, I shall not talk in class. Reconciling with God is not a tit for tat proposition. It is one of mutuality and grace. And maybe God has learned something about human nature, that we all need a little skin in the game.

The tradition teaches that when the tablets were placed in the Ark of the Covenant both sets were included as a reminder of God’s steadfast love and forgiveness. It takes a lot of courage to reconcile differences, but Moses has learned, and we learn through the writing of scripture, both in this story and many others in the Old Testament, that God’s faithfulness is sure.

All of this together must contribute to the radiant light beaming from the face of Moses when he returns. Think how afraid he must have been, how he must have worried that this encounter would be the end, that everyone would be left to perish in the wilderness. And so, when Moses returns with the second set of tablets his face is filled with light from his encounter with God. As we read today, Moses did not know that his face shone because he had been talking with God.

Though the intention of the sentence is to say that in Moses direct encounter with God his face was transfigured but, due to the wording of this translation, we can also hear that he had no idea that he had been transformed in this way because in his encounter with God he lost all thought of himself. We have all experienced those moments of intensity where time stands still and we no longer are bothered by things that normally plague us, whether good things, like blushing in excitement, or less great things like a headache. I would like to believe that Moses has become so engrossed, has lost his self-consciousness, literally, and has for just a moment entered the beatific vision which we are all promised in the end.

A favorite author of mine describes what it must be like to enter eternity and experience the beatific vision of God in this way: Think about being together with people you love all around the dinner table. The candles are lit, the dishes sparkle, every face aglow. For just a moment there is such great laughter and joy that time stands still and that which separates us into individuals melts away and we become as one, together. Now imagine that moment lasting for all eternity. Moses received this blessing, and his face shone. When the disciples receive this same experience with Jesus on the mountaintop, they ask what we all ask, what we all seek. Please Lord, can you make it this way forever?