



**Worship Service Theme: Change
(Transfiguration Sunday, or the Feast of Transfiguration)**

Helpful Elements:
White table cover

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. According to many traditional church calendars, this week we celebrate the Transfiguration, remembering the day Jesus's appearance was transformed into brilliant light and God proclaimed Jesus as His beloved Son. (That's why our table covering today is white.) It's an interesting and beautiful story that illustrates something important: how we, too, are changed by our faith and God's love.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: Exodus 34:29-35

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of Moses's face shone, and the people were afraid to come near him. [Wow! That *would* look scary, wouldn't it!] ³¹ But Moses called to the people, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him. Moses talked with the people [and told them] all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ Whenever Moses went in ... to speak with the Lord, Moses would remove the veil from his face, until he came out. And when Moses came out ... ³⁵ the people of Israel would see ... that the skin of Moses's face was shining.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Mark 9:2-8. This is the story about Jesus that's called the Transfiguration.

²After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And Jesus was transfigured before Peter and James and John, ³ and Jesus's clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And then Elijah with Moses appeared to Peter, James,

and John, and Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus.⁵ And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”⁶ [Peter said this because] he did not know what to say, because he and James and John were terrified.⁷ And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”⁸ And suddenly, looking around, Peter and James and John no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: We’ve just read a couple of interesting stories from the Bible, where people were profoundly transformed—changed—by God’s presence.

- In both cases of “transfiguration,” first with Moses and then with Jesus, the presence of God made their faces *shine*. I wonder why that would be? Why might you think that God’s presence would make something shine like a bright light?
 - God’s presence is full of light and love! It’s like when you see someone you love but haven’t seen in a long time, or when a child sees their parent again after having a babysitter all day; your face “lights up” 😊
 - In these stories, God’s presence and glory “rubbed off” on the physical bodies of Moses and Jesus
- In the transfiguration story recorded in the gospel of Mark, Peter, James, and John are up on the mountain with Jesus, and Jesus is shining like the sun. As if that weren’t scary enough, God’s voice then booms out and says, “This is my beloved son.” Let’s think about that: What does it mean to be beloved?
 - You are chosen, focused upon, special
- Let’s think about this message from God, said out loud so that others could hear it. What kind of message is it? Why did God want Peter, James, and John to hear this?
 - Love: “This [Jesus] is my beloved Son”
 - Direction: “and I want you to focus on him.”

- Before this amazing event, Jesus has been preparing his disciples that a huge change is coming: Jesus is going to die, and then he's going to rise again. How do you think the disciples felt about this news?
 - Disbelief; unprepared; scared of the future
- Can we stop change? When things change in your life, how does it feel?
- Why would Jesus shining like the sun, combined with God's message—"This is my beloved Son, listen to him"—possibly help the disciples (and us, too!) as things around them started to change in ways they didn't like?
 - These miracles give the disciples (and us) a focus: Let go of preconceived ideas of how things "should" go, and focus on God only.
 - There is more going on than meets the eye! The disciples get a preview of Jesus's heavenly, eternal glory. They receive a glimpse of the immensity of Jesus and God's power.
 - God's loving presence transforms Jesus. And God's love transforms us and our view. As St. Paul writes (Rom. 12:1), "Don't let the world mold you into its image, but *be transformed* by the renewal of your mind through God."
- What has helped and still helps you as things around you inevitably change?
 - Comfort from other people
 - Helping others who are having a harder time
 - Remembering what God has done for you in the past; trusting that God will carry you through change and hard times, as God always has
 - Trusting in God's word and promises to be with us always. God's presence with us matters!
 - Here's what I see: All of your faces shine with the love and presence of God.

Let us pray together to that we would be able to hear God's voice, and to know God's love that transforms us and sustains us through change.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father's World

It is Well with My Soul

Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: Quotes on Transformation

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. — ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu

One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world. — Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate

The power of faith is transformative. It can be utilized in your own personal life to change your individual condition, and it can be used as a lifeline of spiritual strength to change a nation. — John Lewis, Civil Rights activist and congressman

Listen to the MUSN'TS, child,

Listen to the DON'TS

Listen to the SHOULDN'TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS

Listen to the NEVER HAVES

Then listen close to me—

Anything can happen child,

Anything can be. —author Shel Silverstein, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*

Suggested Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Shall We Gather at the River

Fourth Reading: *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams

One of my favorite childhood stories is *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams.

In the story, the Velveteen Rabbit, a beloved stuffed bunny, was deeply loved by a boy, who insisted his Rabbit was real. When the boy finally outgrows playing with the Rabbit, the Rabbit is heartbroken. But the Rabbit has this conversation another toy, the Skin Horse, about what it means to be Real.

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” the Rabbit asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)

Extra Material:

Yes, your transformation will be hard. Yes, you will feel frightened, messed up and knocked down. Yes, you’ll want to stop. Yes, it’s the best work you’ll ever do. – leadership expert and speaker Robin Sharma

When we genuinely believe that inner transformation is God's work and not ours, we can put to rest our passion to set others straight. –Quaker theologian and author Richard J. Foster