

## “Me Change?”

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Matthew 16:24-17:8

Lay Minister

Psalms 41:7-10

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What is it we really want? Why do we come to church?



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We each desire so many different things for their lives and futures and we each go to church for many different reasons. Take a minute and discuss this with your neighbor. What is one of the main goals you have for your life? What keeps you coming back to church?

In the gospel text read today, Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death and resurrection. He has been teaching and leading the disciples for months. Even though the disciples have seen Jesus perform hundreds of miracles and Jesus has even given them the power to do this on their own, they still do not realize **who he is** and the sacrifice that he will be making to impact the world. Matthew's gospel tends to be known as the *teaching gospel*. What message is Matthew trying to teach us in this text?

The end is coming near for Jesus and he knows it. He has invested a great deal of time and energy into teaching and leading the disciples, but they still don't quite get it. So Jesus plans to show the disciples something he thinks they will help them understand. Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up a mountainside with him.



As he starts to pray and his entire body glows and his clothing turns white. Jesus was transfigured inside and out. Elijah and Moses both appeared and talked with Jesus. The disciples could hardly believe their eyes. They had likely heard bedtime stories and “scripture school stories” about Elijah and Moses. The disciples recognized the prophets are right away and they are more than impressed by the images they saw. Peter, the disciple voted “Most likely to put his foot in his mouth”, started babbling about making tabernacles, worship shrines or tents to commemorate the amazing site.

Peter is ignored and then God appeared with smoke and lights. In a booming voice, he said: "listen to my son!" The transfiguration confirms that Jesus is the son of the Lord. His message is a saving presence and this image is a preview of the resurrection. Jesus tried everything to get the disciples to hear what he has been foreshadowing. Jesus is the son of the Lord and the sacrificial lamb. Each time Jesus thinks the disciples get a handle on this, he realizes they need to be told it again.

We are a lot like the disciples.



We come to church, hear the Word and have to relearn God's grace week after week. Even if we fully accept it, when we get out in the world we feel lonely, defenseless and scared. We easily forget that God is with us **all the time** and that *our faith* in him, will get us through the worst situations we could ever imagine. It is difficult to understand a God that loves us through our sin and doubt. We come together to build each other up and equip one another to live out our callings. We need to keep coming back together to hear the word and be reassured that God is the God above all other God's and the only power those other forces have is the power we give them. We are all Disciples of Christ, called to live and work in situations in which we can feed others with the *good news* of our savior, but it is difficult to give if we do not receive it for ourselves.

Jesus went through a transfiguration. This is the complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. The word transfiguration comes from the Latin word metamorphosis. When I think of a metamorphosis I think of a butterfly that was once a caterpillar. Many of us probably collected caterpillars in jars when we were kids. I can remember poking holes in the cover and putting a stick and grass into the jar, so the caterpillar felt more comfortable. The jar would then go on the shelf, waiting for the transformation to take place. Jesus was always 100% man, 100% God, but this was not always evident to the disciples. When Jesus was praying on the mountain, God revealed himself through his son's presence with the influx of light and past prophets. Through these images, the disciples could see and feel the power that radiated from the begotten son of God. As disciples we are called to live out of baptismal promise; to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the examples of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth!



What is it going to take to get your attention? What is going to make you commit yourself to achieve real change in your life? God is not done creating and molding us into the people he made us to be. Transformation can come at any time, but it takes a constant effort to live in the manner in which faith and discipleship are foremost in your life. I asked you why you come to church because I want you to consider what brings you here. Is it for the fellowship, the music, the sense of peace, to avoid guilt, to get out of the house or is it for the doughnut holes? Some people sit in their pews for years, listening to the word of God and hear motivational sermons, but never have any intention on changing their personal beliefs, growing in their faith or developing a closer relationship to God. Rev. Dave Daubert, an ELCA pastor, and creator of Day 8 Strategies a campaign for transformational encounters with Christ states that 72% of people who attend church have no vested or personal relationship with Christ. God does not need you, but he does want you. To fully recognize how much he loves us, we have to be willing to sacrifice our selfish desires so that God can **use us** in the way he intended.