

Sermon for January 25th, 2026

The TRANSFIGURATION

READINGS

Exodus 34:29-35

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, 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 his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. **31** But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. **32** Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded 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 before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, **35** the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

2 Peter 1:16-21

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 17:1-9

1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. **3** And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." **5** He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." **8** And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. **9** And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Our text for meditation on the Sunday of our Lord's Transfiguration is on our Psalm reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Introduction

I'd like you to imagine something. Let's say there is a magical ostrich that follows you around. He sits in your car when you go to work and he follows you to the jobsite. He goes with you when you take a walk outside. This giant bird refuses to leave you alone, he even sleeps next to you at night. If you try to hide, the ostrich finds you. If you try to run away, he is faster than you. If you try to hurt him, he is stronger and tougher than you. For that matter, the creature is invincible. Shooting or poisoning it will not work.

Now, this ostrich has no normal motivations. This is a *failure ostrich*, here to make sure your life crashes and burns at every step. If you pull money out of your wallet to buy a soda at the gas station, the ostrich knocks it out of your hands and eats your spare change. If you try to take a nap on the weekend, he caws and shouts until you just can't sleep. You desperately want to live your life, but this feathered fiend has made it his mission to keep you from enjoying anything but working and helping other people.

What would you do with such a creature? Clearly, it would soon be evident that only two options are presented to you, an easy way and a hard way. First, you could attempt to reason with it, find out what it wants, and do whatever it is this undesired companion demands. That's the easy way, and it has a chance of working. The second option is to fruitlessly fight and struggle with it over and over again forever. That will never work. Now my friends, what are the chances that people would take the first option when confronted by the ostrich? If world leaders were asked...the answer is none.

The World's Problem

In reality, the ostrich represents the deal that God has presented to the world, and it is a simple one. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way.” First, all countries are told very simply that they must obey and honor Christ in the administrations of their governments. What does it look like to do this? The Psalmist writes, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” All the world's leaders are told that they must do so, and God doesn't seem to care what sort of government it is that they lead, whether it is a democracy or a monarchy or a dictatorship or whatever. They are to honor our Lord and keep His Commandments. Now, in case they ask what is in it for them if they *obey* this deal and side with Jesus, the answer is simple: He will bless them. To sum it up, here is the deal: either be a government that rejects Jesus and fails at everything until you miserably perish, OR be a government that honors Jesus and be blessed in all that you undertake.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of world leaders fail this simple deal, and thus God makes a laughingstock out of all of them. The Islamic countries consistently humiliate themselves whenever they attempt to do warfare. Marxist countries are nearly extinct, as their system of anti-Christian political ideology turned out to be so unworkable that the entire Soviet Union didn't last even one century. European nations abandoned Christ and sided with the world, abolishing Christendom; now their militaries cannot fight their way out of a paper bag and their populations are under extreme duress.

Of course, fealty to Christ can be something of a spectrum. Some countries limp idly by with the mere permission for their populations to *be* Christian; on account of that, they are not destroyed despite their wicked leadership. But even they have the “ostrich” around their necks, because they only halfheartedly *permit* the presence of our Lord instead of attempting to stamp the faith out. Their populations are shackled to frustration: as an example, did you know that Americans almost never get the policies that polling data says they want? For that matter, their votes do not actually determine election outcomes.¹

My friends, I am sure that if you look all around you that you will find nothing but waste, frustration, and failure in the political realm. No one is happy with it. But this is not because some ideology is missing from your government. It is because your government has joined in with the kings of the earth in rebellion against God. They care nothing for His Commandments, they do not recognize Jesus to be the true Christ, and if they are not grudgingly permitting a Christian presence they are trying to chase believers out. The ostrich is right there making their lives harder and harder, but they choose to keep trying the same thing over and over again as though God would ever let them have full success.

Why is this the case? Why aren't there any countries whose leadership goes out of their way to glorify our Lord? The answer is very simple. They want to be gods themselves, and they have driven themselves mad trying to make that happen. To confess Christ, or “kiss the Son,” is to say that *He* is God and we are not. Our flesh rages against that mightily to the point of madness. Our governments would rather say that men can become women, women can become men, that importing innumerable welfare clients enriches their countries, that technology can make man immortal – and a whole host of other impossible and absurd things, because they *want that to be the case*. God says no to them, and they, desiring to be deities themselves, try to rule their domains anyway.

Man's Problem

Let us not be arrogant here though. We are in no position to judge the world leaders, for governments consist of humans and all humans are sinners. That you and I sin at all tells us that there is a part of each one of us that wishes we were God as well. Every time someone watches pornography, it is not just the urges of our lustful bodies giving them those desires – it is from their flesh saying “I should be able to do this without it being sin, *I* want to be right and I want God to be *wrong*.” Every

¹ <https://www.uniteamerica.org/articles/report-most-americans-votes-dont-matter-in-deciding-elections>

time you covet something in your heart, your sinful flesh is telling God that He was wrong in giving something to your neighbor instead of you. Every time you lie about someone or try to harm their reputation, you tell the Lord of all truth that *you* want to be the lord of all truth. Our politicians are awful yes, but have we considered how many of them are operating in service to *other* sinful people?

The threat and the promise are yours as well, even on the individual level. Yes, our Psalm says in no uncertain terms that the “ostrich” is present with the rulers of the world, whether they are in Davos or the World Economic Forum or OPEC or the United Nations or wherever. Yes, God threatens them with destruction if they rebel and with blessing if they submit. But this very same threat and this very same promise hovers over you my friend.

You could decide to live your way. You could do what you want and fight against what God says and be some raucous anarchist your entire life. Sure. But that will not end well for you. Our Lord always wins, He never loses, and no one gets away with rebelling against Him. Even if for a time you enjoy drunkenness and arrogance and theft and stinginess and fornication, even if it appears that for a while you get away with it, it shall not continue on forever. Eventually the Hand of God presses down on the rebel, his world crashes around him, and the next stop on the road (if he does not repent) is hell itself.

God's Solution

You could, on the other hand, listen to what Christ has to say and hear what exactly it is that He wants. While I assume that everyone reading (or hearing) this homily is already a believer, it is worth repeating. The Psalmist says that “Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.” The thing to do is believe, to receive Christ's free offer of salvation, and to tell Him “I am doomed unless You forgive me.” *Then*, as you receive what our Lord has to offer you with no merit of your own, you will find that He will bring about greater holiness and obedience in your very soul. The end of that road is eternal life.

You see my friends, the madness of sin is found in the heart of every human being. It is the madness of trying in vain to rebel against an omnipotent Being who sees our every move and can never be defeated. The rulers of this world do what they do because they cannot do otherwise, and even if they could the insane temptations coming from their hearts means that they would likely choose to rebel anyway. No amount of trying to *earn* our place in Heaven can work, because we sin constantly. God knows this, and so He sent His Son to die for our sins, that we may receive the only true way to escape judgment: “Kiss the Son” - that is, recognize Who He is, and trust in Him.

Conclusion

One Day, Christ will return. The presidents and prime ministers and the kings and the dictators of the world will be at their cocktail parties. They'll be making their next plans together to inch further into the technological dystopia they have coveted for years and years now, infinite power brought to you by AI and globalism. They'll be counting their money and getting ready to do more nefarious things when – BAM! Christ shall come with a rod of iron to destroy every last piece of their ungodly kingdoms. The only people who will escape the moment when Jesus makes every nation His footstool will be those who did not resist the message of the Gospel, who said “I am Yours, save me!” and then proceeded to serve with fear and rejoice with trembling. Those who went to our Lord asking forgiveness for their misdeeds, and took refuge in His mercy. If you do so today my friends, that deliverance is promised to you. Repent and be Baptized, and rejoice at the deliverance He promises. For the “ostrich” I brought up is just a symbol, but the coming Judgment is *very* real.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.