

At least two people from our church family are, I am sure, familiar with this logo: BJ Brown-Tyree and Katrina Guy, both of whom, while from Florence, are Elders on Session of Desert Hope Presbyterian Church.

The logo is that of Facebook, on which both post, though Katrina's posts of pictures of her cats is a direct violation of a commandment in Leviticus: *Thou shalt not post cat pictures on the Internet*. (It also appears in that portion of Deuteronomy that has: "If it's not chocolate, it's not dessert.")

But the reason I mention Facebook, and though I posted on it even this last week, I do view it with some contempt and disdain and, well, snobbery, is that Mark Zuckerberg, the head of Facebook's parent corporation, is changing Facebook's name to *Meta*, and the Greek word that forms that title, *meta*, always leads me to the word, *metamorphosis*, which is almost the same word in English as its Greek, *metamorphosen*.

*Metamorphosis*, as I frequently have noted over the years, is how we describe a caterpillar's eventually becoming a butterfly: It is a change in form, as are metamorphic rocks. A change in form, what we might call a *transformation*.

On this Sunday, the last Sunday before Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday in three days time, each year we observe the *Transfiguration* — *transfiguration*, not *transformation* — the *Transfiguration* of the Lord. And I think in this case, hoping you all can hear me, that as we are observing this "Transfiguration of the Lord" while celebrating The Lord's Supper — celebrating it for the last time until we celebrate again on Maundy Thursday, when the Last Supper itself occurred — as we are celebrating the time of the Last Supper, perhaps *transformation* and not just *transfiguration* has meaning and relevance to us.

Very simply, *transfiguration* is a change in appearance, no more; it is a change *in appearance*, although one can certainly feel free to ask whether the story we read from

the Gospel according to Luke is describing Jesus's actually appearing differently himself or Jesus's being seen differently by the disciples when put alongside of Moses and Elijah. Do not ask me how the disciples would have known it was Moses and Elijah since no photos existed, obviously, and the Second Commandment would have guaranteed that there were not portraits or other representations of either of these two, but the point of their being present, these two, is that Moses represented and represents the Law, the Jewish Law or *Torah*, and Elijah represented and represents the Prophets for Jews — and for us. It is in the Law and the Prophets that God's teaching was conveyed, and the point of Jesus' appearing with Moses and Elijah is to say to us that "Jesus is the fulfillment of 'the Law and the Prophets!'"

As I was doing a small bit of research on the Greek used in the passage on the Transfiguration that I read moments ago, and found once again that the Gospels do not use *metamorphosen*, I learned that one of my "heroes" of the early Church, Origen, in the Second Century, I learned that Origen thought the *transfiguration* was sort of a precursor of the *resurrection*, which really meets the test of *metamorphosis*, of *transformation*. While in the only stories we have of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus it seems that he looked the same, he was not! A human does not pass through the walls into a closed room.

But be that as it may, let us focus not on *transfiguration* but on *transformation*, on *metamorphosis*, and not on Jesus' *metamorphosis* from earthly to resurrected, but on our own metamorphosis when we go from indifferent ignorer to faithful believer.

Jeff Zuckerberg is basing the future of Facebook/Meta on what is called *virtual reality*, not reality, virtual reality, wearing a head set that allows us to see things as though they are really there that in fact are not.

He envisions us not so much burying our heads in the sand but in a helmet. He proposes to *metamorphose* nothing into, well, into the appearance of something, yet it remains nothing. Cheap thrill, if you want it; I do not want virtual, I want real.

Now, I suppose Zuckerberg might say that what we do here in the Sacrament is *virtual*, that we think juice and wine can become the body and blood of Christ, but that is why in my very sincere and best Reformed theological mold, and with all apologies to those who follow the teaching of some other denominations on this matter, I try to emphasize in my words that such transformation or even trans-substantiation is not how Presbyterians view what we are doing, though you are free to apply your own interpretation; I accept that how we as Christians might have different views on the Sacrament does not change our faith in Jesus Christ. But my point is, what we are doing is not virtual; these are real juice and real bread and we are in fact ingesting them, even though they are merely symbols ingested as part of an observance to remind us of much more, and so I take care to use the words, and the words are biblical, “the Bread of Life”; “the Cup of Salvation.”

For me, the elements are neither virtual nor transfigured nor transformed; their reality is enough to direct our minds and spirits to the one who gave the Sacrament to us.

But the point of Celebrating the Sacrament, it seem to me, is not to see whether we can *metamorphose* the elements into something they represent, but whether the Sacrament *and why we celebrate it* can do something to us, whether the Sacrament and why we celebrate it *have done something to us*, done something not to make us appear different, that is, to transfigure us, but done something to make us actually change, *to transform us*, to *metamorphose* us, and that is indeed the word Paul uses in Romans when he writes:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed [in Paul’s Greek, metamorphosen] by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:2 (NRSV)]*

I do not mean to suggest that engaging in the Sacrament is what transforms us, but, rather, that as we celebrate The Lord's Supper we are indeed reminded of what God through Jesus has done for us, and that if not in the moment of celebration, that *over time* faith takes such root in us, faith energized by the bread and cup we share, that we are indeed *transformed* into faithful followers of Jesus Christ, *metamorphosed* into being able indeed to discern and to seek to follow the will of God made flesh in Jesus, perhaps *transfigured* enough ourselves so that people can see the presence of Jesus within us, the same Jesus who, on the night before he died, well let Paul in 1 Corinthians tell us: