



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Funeral Sermon for Richard Evenson
February 16, 2026

The Promise of Transfiguration

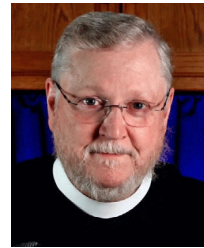
Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Yesterday, the Christian world celebrated the revelation of Christ's glory to His apostles Peter, James, and John, on what we have come to call the Mount of Transfiguration. That Christ pulled back a corner of His veil, giving a glimpse of His true nature to the disciples, and through them to us, is a source of great joy, for it was not a mere man who suffered and died for us, but it was the God-Man, the one who was God in the flesh, who not only died, but rose again, foreshadowing our own resurrection from the dead. For true joy does not come from sports championships, nor does it come from drilling a hole in the ice and pulling up a prize winning fish. Such things bring no relief to those who mourn. They have their place, but you don't need me to tell you that when times turn bad things such as these seem a bit hollow. The biggest sturgeon doesn't cut it when you're alone. And yet, the Church's joy – the disciples' joy – at the glory of our Lord, is not so fleeting. You can have it now, and always, even in the midst of your sadness. God took up our flesh. He became a Man. He entered into our world and wore our skin. He knows our pain, our frustrations, our weariness and anger. He came to be our Savior. Nothing, not even death, can stop Him. It's not the joy of childhood summers and adventures. It's different than that. It's deeper and more satisfying. It's also more abiding; it even remains in sadness.

You know, of course, that Jesus' adopted father Joseph was not at the foot of the cross. He may have already been dead. Mary was likely a widow. Jesus most likely had lost His earthly father and Mary was given into the care of the apostle John. So also did Our Lord lose His cousin, John the Baptist, to the violence of Herod. And He wept when His friend Lazarus died. He knows your pain, not just as God who knows all things, but as a Man who bore these things as well, who lost loved ones, was betrayed by friends, was denied justice, and endured great physical pain for the joy that was before Him. He has felt all the things you've ever felt. He has laughed and cried, been happy and lonely, be



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Funeral Sermon for Richard Evenson

February 16, 2026

content and tired, satisfied but also cold and hungry. Most significantly for today He has grieved and mourned. And all of that He did, all the things you endure and experience, He did without sin. So don't apologize for your sadness. Don't brush it off. It's real, and it's honest. There's no shame in it. And it cannot be removed simply by wishing it away. But you will learn to cope. You will learn to live with it. Time will lessen its sting.

But nothing lessens it like the reality of Jesus' resurrection. We do not grieve as those who have no hope. Our pain is real. It's not merely momentary. But we remember that Jesus once slept in a manger because there was no room in the inn. We remember the Love of God that would not stop until full payment was made, that suffered the mockery and insults, the thorns, and nails, and spear. God loves you and God loves Richard. That makes all the difference. St. Paul writes that Our Lord endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. Jesus became a Man. As a Man He had faith, and He believed that He would rise. He believed what the prophets had written, that death would not win, that it could not hold Him. His Word is true. He does not lie. He passed through death and hell. He emptied them of all their power and threats. He rose again to life just days after being laid to rest. He now sits at the right hand of the Father, a Man like us, our elder Brother, and rules all the universe. That's why He did it, why He endured the cross. He did it so that He could sit at the right hand of His Father as a Man. Of course, He was at His Father's right hand before He became a Man. He was there before Bethlehem and Jerusalem. But now He's there as a Man, as one of us. The One who sits at the right hand of the Father is the One for whom there was no room in the Inn, the One who loved those who hated Him, the One who shut the devil's mouth. He is there as a Man with man's redemption won. He has opened heaven again to men. His joy, the reason He endured the cross, was to win and rescue you, to make you His, to bring you into His presence and joy. The ransom has been paid. There's nothing more to do. God, born in Bethlehem and transfigured on the mountain, loves you.

Thus we believe and thus we confess: those who sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him. They are not dead. Jesus is not dead. He lives. So do they. That is how and why we're even now surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, of saints made holy in the Blood of Christ, of saints delivered from their troubles, their toils, and their sins. Rick is now in that number. For was he not baptized? Did not God make a promise to him, to remember him, to call him by name, to hear his prayers, and deliver his soul? Was not Jesus once a Baby, weak and small, poor and quiet? Did He not lay down His life and rise up again for Richard and for all? Oh yes, He did. He is the Savior. He is *our* Savior.

Here is comfort for those who miss Richard: he confessed his hope in Jesus Christ and looked forward to an eternity with Him in glory. God made a promise to him and God keeps His Word. So Rick now waits for you, as do all the saints at peace. He has come to his reward. He has been transfigured into the image of Christ. And, while he cannot come back to you, you can go where he has gone. When it's time God will bring you there.



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Funeral Sermon for Richard Evenson

February 16, 2026

You will have your own transfiguration. In the meantime, lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares, and run with endurance the race that is set before you. Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, to Jesus with whom all things are possible, to Jesus who once was laid in a tomb but who is alive along with all His saints. Rick is waiting for you. He's singing, with angels, like he never sang before. It's a joyful season for him to be sure. Your day will also come. Your sadness will end. You will see Jesus, your Redeemer, for yourself, in all His glory, and every tear, every worry and fear, every guilt and regret will be removed. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen