

Sermon Draft

Text: Hebrews 3:1–6

Sermon: “Transfiguration 2022”

Today we celebrate the Transfiguration, Transfiguration is the bridge between Epiphany and Lent. Like the disciples, we have been following Jesus, slowly learning more and more about how special he is. Now, as the road to the cross nears, we are given a special glimpse of this glory and hear the voice of the Father telling us to listen to Jesus. Only in hearing and listening to Jesus, and in knowing that he is truly the one who deserves all glory, will we be able to handle the road ahead.

Our Epistle for, Transfiguration, provides us with something we are told that we ought to consider. **“Consider Jesus,”** the author of Hebrews says (v 1), and then tells us something so important: **“Jesus, you should know, is more deserving of glory than Moses.”** So critical is that truth that the added bold print that separates one section of Holy Scripture from another in most Bibles says, **“Jesus Greater Than Moses.”** I have to say that it falls as a bit obvious. Because no one in this room has gathered here to glorify Moses. We know Jesus is greater than Moses, who was pretty great himself.

But before we move on with this established truth, let us put ourselves squarely in the place of three folks who don't yet know what we know: Peter and James and John. They, of course, are living this moment without the clarity that has been given to us, inheritors of the confession that our Great High Priest, Jesus, has given. For those three men, that anyone or anything was greater than Moses might indeed have come as a shock.

Mount Tabor is 1,886 feet high, a difficult climb for many of us. But for Jesus and the disciples; they seem to handle it without complaint. Imagine being called to accompany Jesus on a special event. I've noticed as I'm getting older that when I walk on anything other than flat ground, I keep my eyes down, thinking about little more than the placement of the next step.

But let us assume that Peter and James and John are better at mountain climbing than I am and maybe you are. If these steps came easily to them, it isn't hard to imagine that they could have spent time climbing this rocky place thinking about the grand stories they'd heard about the heroes of old, who had met God on the tops of mountains.

Likely for the three disciples climbing up after Jesus, when they were small children heard the stories of the ancestral heroes: David the king, Elijah the prophet, Joseph the prince of Egypt.

But none took the hushed tones and the serious leaning-forward attention that came when voices told the story of Moses. Lamps burning low and warm, light flickering across the face of a loved one. Gathered around the fire as Grandpa began, “Even his birth was near impossible. Then with a smile on his face he’d say, I’m sure I’ve told this one.” “No, Papa, we please tell us again. The bush aflame, then the escape, and the water parting, and the words of the Lord written in stone, the face aglow and water from rocks, and don’t forget, don’t ever forget, the words we read. So many were penned by this mighty servant of God, whom none has surpassed; none has seen God quite the way old Moses did.

Those are the true and world-forming stories with which Peter, James, and John grew up. And suddenly they find themselves not just with Jesus but also with Moses himself, and Elijah too.

“Consider Jesus,” the author of Hebrews gently implores us. Consider him. The voice of the Father was more absolute. Clearer and less of an invitation and more of a command: ***“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”*** (Luke 9:35).

Jesus is more worthy of glory than others they idolized and idealized. Jesus is greater. Consider him. Peter had mentioned what seemed like a reasonable idea: “What if we stayed awhile?” But did he mistake the moment as a chance for them to glory in Moses and Elijah? Did they not realize who they had followed up and will soon follow down the mountain, the glory of God himself in the person of Jesus? Maybe. “Listen to him! My Son! Consider Jesus, would you? So much more worthy of glory than Moses.”

Of course, what we know, and what Peter, James, and John would soon learn, is that God’s version of glory looks surprisingly like what you and I might consider shame. They don’t know that yet. At least don’t know the gravity of it yet.

Consider with me the kinds of things the disciples might have thought about on the way down the mountain. If while walking up they remembered what their families had told them about Moses, maybe on the way down they thought about what they could tell their families about Jesus. If not that day, then someday soon. Someday soon enough, John wrote down so much of what Jesus said and did, and maybe he had moments like this in mind.

Consider Jesus, who is more worthy of glory than Moses: Moses is from old, goes way back; people have been flocking to him for years! But Jesus was with God in the beginning.

Look at all Moses did! Separated the sea! But Jesus walked on water. Moses caused bread to be found on the ground after taking his concerns to God! But Jesus is the bread of life. Moses made water flow from a rock! But Jesus is living water.

Moses wrote all these sacred words! But Jesus is the Word. The very Word of God. And really, if you hear Moses correctly, he's whispering to us to consider Jesus. That glory the disciples saw also on Moses' face there on the mountain it's the reflected glory of Jesus.

That Promised Land toward which he journeyed, that's rest in Jesus.

Moses took our people from slavery toward freedom! But that exodus, as glorious as it was, John might have said, is just not even on the same level as the exodus Jesus performs, through death to life, with the promise of the same for his people. Slavery conquered, not to old Pharaoh in Egypt but slavery to sin and death and the power of the devil. Live and believe in him, and you'll never die. But Moses was the instrument that God used. Jesus Christ is God. Consider Jesus!

The author to the Hebrews ends our reading today with words like this, words that might satisfy the staunchest defender of Moses: Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house. But Jesus was faithful over God's house . . . as a Son. And the difference, we might ask? John explained the idea so beautifully. In chapter 8 of his Gospel: ***"A servant doesn't remain in the house forever, but the Son does, he remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed"*** (John 8:35–36).

So, do consider Jesus, would you? Because he does offer that freedom today. Freedom to live in him and die in him. And considering him, do heed the voice of God, too, and listen to Jesus. Not just what he says about you and your life but also the words he had spoken to his disciples just days before the transfiguration and then again on the way down the mountain that he must die and rise and lead from the cross the most glorious exodus the world has ever seen.

He's worth more glory than Moses. As we consider Moses and the great gifts-of-faith heroes that God has placed around us. Be thankful for them, but know that Jesus is worthy of even more glory.

Listen to him and follow him. And do know that steps down the mountain can be dicey. If you remember only the view and forget to watch where you're going, well, you'd fail to see him walk to the cross, fail to know that you can meet God on that mountain too, Calvary. Follow him to Calvary often. And consider him, who was with God in the beginning, who is the glory of the Father among us.

He has dwelt among us and brings light among us and says to all who would believe in him that you, too, can be the daughters and sons of God. And if he says it, it's true, because if the son sets you free, you are free indeed.

Amen