

Sermon Draft

Text: Matthew 17:1–9

Sermon: Transfiguration 2017

Since the time of the Reformation, the Festival of Transfiguration has marked the end of the season after the Epiphany. Jesus is on the mountain, and the glory of his divine nature radiates through his human flesh. Of all the manifestations of his glory, this is the chief, but even here, when Jesus is surrounded by the cloud of light and in the council of Moses and Elijah, his cross is in view. Lent is around the corner; Jesus, the God-man, is the Suffering Servant. From the height of the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus has a clear view of Calvary, his goal.

In our Epistle from 2 Peter we have Peter not only giving his eyewitness account of the transfiguration; he also expounds on the theological significance of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah: ***“we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.”***

(2 Peter 1:19).

In our Psalm, Psalm 2 we have a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. The Father confesses for us the eternal begottenness of the Son. As the rulers of the world plot together to unbind themselves from the Ten Commandments, the Father and the Son laugh, knowing that Jesus, the Messiah and the King, will be enthroned in Jerusalem. His enthronement is his cross.

And in our Old Testament lesson Moses, together with Aaron, his two sons (Nadab and Abihu), and the seventy elders of Israel, eat with God. Moses and Joshua then travel to the top of the mountain where, transfiguration-like, covered in the cloud of the Lord's glory, Moses receives the two tablets of the Ten Commandments and the instructions for worship.

It is stunning to think that in the transfiguration Moses has to travel to earth to meet with God and talk with his Lord Jesus!

And then we have our Gospel the text for this morning. The transfiguration of Jesus is an astonishing account with a lot of moving parts. There is Jesus radiating with divine glory. There are Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about his crucifixion. There are the cloud of God's glory and the voice from heaven. This is the second-time God the Father speaks in the New Testament. And He says almost the same words both times; ***"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him."*** And at his baptism ***"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*** The only difference is this time he gives the added words of instruction; ***"listen to him."***

There are treasures in each and every one of the things that the Holy Spirit has put before us today. But for our comfort, we will consider how it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and how Jesus was comforting them in the tribulation because the glory of the transfiguration is a preface to the glory of the cross.

As we join Jesus and the disciples on the mountain, Jesus is transfigured, his appearance changed, our text says his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. Now by this time the disciples were probably shaking in their sandals. Then Moses and Elijah appear and they are talking to Jesus. The three disciples, Peter, James and John can see the trio talking and hear some of the conversation. Jesus is talking to Moses and Elijah about his journey to Jerusalem to die.

Many believe that they came to offer words of encouragement to Jesus to continue and finish his journey. Of course, we know he would but even so it's nice to hear words of encouragement sometimes. And none of us have to worry about being nailed to a cross for the sins of the world.

And then we have Peter, in the midst of this most glorious event where a glimpse of Christ glory is revealed wants to put up tents for Jesus and his two special guests. Now at first this might seem a little weird but it was the custom if special guests came to visit you would put up tents for them so they could get out of the hot sun. But Peter had another motivation. He wanted to remain or capture this glorious event by building these tents so they all could stay there on that mountain top. It was safe up there and it was after all glorious as the glory of God shown around them. Who wouldn't want to remain there and be safe and happy.

But Jesus didn't come to live on a mountain top, no he came to die on a cross and go to the depths of hell for us. We like the picture of Jesus along with Moses and Elijah up on that mountain with the brightness of his glory shining around them but Jesus had to come down off that mountain and so did Peter, James and John. Jesus had a mission to complete and the disciples had a message to share and bring to the world.

We like Peter sometimes want to remain safely here in this building or in our homes but like the disciples Jesus has a message and yes, a mission for us and it involves us leaving the safety of our homes and our church building. The gift of our faith is not something we keep safely tucked inside it is something that Christ compels us to go out and live and as we live our faith to share it. When we like Peter want to stay on our mountain top we need to hear our Father's words, "Listen to Jesus."

Jesus couldn't stay on that mountain top, if he did we would still be lost and have no hope. We need the bleeding Jesus to be saved. Suffering must come first, then the glory, as Jesus preached to the disciples on the road to Emmaus: ***“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”*** Luke 24:36) We need the forgiveness of our sins before we are ready to live in God's glory.

Jesus touches the disciples and commands them to stand and not to be afraid. The disciples can now stand with Jesus, unafraid for the true glory is now ahead. In a flash Moses and Elijah are gone, the cloud is gone even the brightness from Jesus' face is gone. But they now look to the glory that is to come along with us can go forward with the certain hope that is ours in Christ Jesus and be unafraid.

We might think of the transfiguration as the “high point” of Jesus’ ministry, but it is only a vantage point from which Jesus can see clearly where he is going. From the height of the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus sees Jerusalem. From the glory of the transfiguration, Jesus sees the humiliation of his death on the cross. From the splendor of the transfiguration, Jesus sees the sorrow to come, and in the midst of that sorrow he sees us, our forgiveness, and our salvation.

Amen