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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 7, 2016  
Transfiguration Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 25:1-9, 2 Peter 1:16-21

Hymns: 239; 719; 135; 644 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 17:1-9

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup>and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. <sup>4</sup>Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" <sup>6</sup>And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." <sup>8</sup>When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

<sup>9</sup>Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Road trip

This past week some family business took me and one of my daughters down to Atlanta, Georgia. We flew down, saw mostly storm clouds. We drove back, about 1100 miles by the time I arrived back here in Austin. I have commented in the past about how beautiful, even glorious our country is. There are so many sights that simply cause one to “ooh” and “ahh” as one marvels at the beauty of America. Not so much in the opening days of February. We saw a lot of pretty bleak landscape in greys and dull browns. It was almost a relief to get far enough north that we saw snow again, but then the snow was pretty much dirty and slushy and not very nice either. We were so starved for color that we actually exclaimed in surprise when we saw a few pansies in bloom outside our motel in Atlanta. One might say; “What else would you expect to see in the middle of winter?”

That is the way things are for mankind also. The winter of sin has brought the blight of death upon the world and upon mankind. What should be glorious beyond belief has been dulled and made not only plain, but murky by the filth and corruption of sin. We still see plenty of evidence of God’s wisdom and glory in His creation, including in our bodies which have been “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14), but it’s not at all the way God originally made us. The glory isn’t there.

Jesus came down to earth and took on our human nature. He appeared in “the likeness of sinful flesh,” even though He was not sinful. He came to “condemn sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The glory of the Lord was veiled in flesh.

Only glimpses of the divine glory that was Christ's were seen in His miracles, in His teaching, in His sacrifice for sin. One of the events when such a peek was allowed for three select witnesses is recounted for us in our text. So the Spirit leads us to see in --

**THEME:** Jesus' Transfiguration A Special Revelation of Glory Connected to Christ.

This event grants us --

I. A Glimpse of the Glory Yet to Be Seen.

**Matthew 17:1-3** Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Jesus invited the three disciples that were closest to Him to accompany Him on this special occasion. This indicates that this was an event of great significance for Jesus as well. The time was near. Things were coming to the climax of Jesus' mission. What lay before Jesus was not only of great significance for us and our salvation, it was an extremely difficult event that lay before Jesus. The time was approaching when He would be delivered over to His enemies and suffer many things at their hands - at the hands of sinners - at the hands of those who despised Him and what Jesus represented. And so Jesus took these three dear friends with Him as He ascended this mountain.

And then it happened. Jesus changed right before their eyes. Our English translation says Jesus was transfigured

before them. The Greek word is the one from which the English “metamorphosis” comes. I think this fact helps our understanding. Jesus was radically changed. Yes, He was still in human form, but what was now seen was not the likeness of *sinful* flesh, as Paul describes our Lord in Romans 8. Now Jesus’ glory as of the only begotten Son of God shone bright and clear. The glory of the Lord was brilliant beyond words. His face shone like the sun, like the SUN! Even His clothes became brilliant because of the Lord’s glory, “white as light!” This display of glory was not without its purpose. The event necessitated it. Jesus was to be encouraged by the events of that day.

There appeared before Jesus two of the prophets of old. Moses and Elijah appeared and visited with Jesus. How this was possible is up to God. What this meant for Jesus was a special encouragement, for we are told that they spoke of His passion that lay before Him in Jerusalem. By the appearance of a glorified Moses and a glorified Elijah Jesus was reminded why His sufferings were necessary, and what His sufferings had already accomplished. His sufferings secured redemption and salvation and glory for fallen sinners.

Now consider what significance this held for Peter, James, and John. They saw the Lord’s glory. They saw the glory that Jesus displays as our ascended Lord. They saw a glimpse of what was to come.

They saw a glimpse of what was to come for themselves as well. Yes, it would be arrogant and foolish for us to suggest that we were as important as Moses or Elijah, after all both of them were bold prophets of the Lord. However, they also were sinners who needed a Savior

from sin and death. They were glorified, and were privileged to stand before the Lord!

That is the glory that Jesus secured not only for Moses and Elijah, but for all those also who love His appearing. This is what Jesus' sufferings were all about, **our** redemption, **our** deliverance, **our** reception into heaven. This was not however the extent of the significance of this event for Jesus, or for those who put their trust in Him.

## **II. The Father's Divine Endorsement --**

adds another dimension to the manifestation of Jesus' glory.

**Matthew 17: 5-8** "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' <sup>6</sup> And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." <sup>8</sup> When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."

Even as they were taking in the sight of Jesus with Moses and Elijah, things progressed in a powerful way. That bright cloud appeared over the mountain. It was not just any cloud with some sunshine piercing through, as we might see in the sky and marvel at as it reminds us of the glory of Lord. It radiated with the glory and power and majesty of Almighty God! Think back to when Moses, who appeared on this mountain with Jesus, ascended Mount Sinai. Remember how the Lord revealed His presence there at Sinai with the bright cloud. So also at

the transfiguration this was a cloud that represented the very presence of Almighty God. At the transfiguration the voice of God testified concerning the person of Jesus Christ that this Jesus was the eternal Son of God with whom the Father was well pleased.

How can one express the significance of this endorsement? Endorsements in politics don't matter much. It's usually just one politician trying to curry favor with another. This is different. Here God speaks not just to Jesus, or only to Peter, James, and John, but the Father testifies so that you might know that this Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. With this endorsement also comes an endorsement of the message which Jesus brings into the world. The Father declared, "**Hear Him!**" Jesus taught the people about the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus taught the people (and so also us) about the only way to come to God, which is through Jesus and His blood shed for us on the cross.

This command is important for us in our time yet today. So many have been led down wrong paths to trust in their own merits. So many today have been misled into accepting ideas of universalism, that all people will ultimately be saved even without faith in Jesus. Many have been misled into believing that "truth" is always changing, and that what society views as truth is truth for today.

**Listen to Jesus.** Jesus tells us about the only true God. Jesus leads us in the paths of righteousness. Jesus and only Jesus can bring us to the glory that awaits us in heaven.

The Father would have you know without doubt or reservation that Jesus is the Christ, His Son, our Savior, and that He brings us the truth of our salvation. So then let us consider --

### **III. Faith's Response.**

Let us start with Peter's response to the sight that as before him:

**Matthew 17:4** "Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'"

This response came immediately before the bright cloud appeared with the voice of God the Father. Already Peter was more than a bit overwhelmed by what he was witnessing. His response has often been criticized for revealing his spiritual limitations. Without doubt Peter's response was inadequate to the situation, but it was a response that came from faith, and a realization that this was an exceptional and special event to be treasured. He wanted this special experience to be preserved.

However, Peter's response also demonstrates the need for some spiritual maturity and understanding. Before Peter would share this special event with others he would grow in his knowledge of Jesus' mission. He would also grow in his understanding of the significance of the events of that day. Our epistle lesson this morning shows Peter's growth that came by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit shaping and strengthening Peter's faith. He understood that the Scriptures were made "more sure" by that event. He was enabled by the Spirit to share the

events of that day with the world, witnessing with certainty and clarity regarding Jesus being the Christ, and the salvation that we have through faith in His merits.

So what is faith's response for you and me? To be sure it will be inadequate, for we remain weak because of our flesh. What could we do that would be worthy of the glory of Jesus and the salvation in His name? What is worthy of Jesus' glory is that we do as the Father instructed, **Hear Him!** Hear and believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. May that truth take hold of our hearts by the working of the Holy Spirit! Then faith will respond with testifying to the truth of Jesus before the world so that others may appreciate the wonder of His glory as the Christ. We will glory in the cross of Christ. We will do all in our power to share the message of life and salvation that Jesus has brought to light in this world.

The Transfiguration event was in preparation for the passion that was to come. It was a special event for all present, including Jesus, as He was encouraged before facing the ordeal He had to endure to gain for us our salvation. It was also special for those who believe for it certified Jesus as the Christ. It revealed His glory as the Son of God, and it confirmed the Word of God as it is and ever shall be: the Word of Christ, the only truth that saves.

This week we proceed into the season of Lent. May the Spirit open our eyes to see the glory of Jesus, God's Son in His Passion, and open our hearts to hear the saving gospel of a crucified Savior.

**AMEN.**



“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)