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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 26, 2017  
Transfiguration Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 24:12, 15-18; 2 Peter 1:16-19  
Hymns: 359; 719; 35; 45 (244:1-3)

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

Sermon Text: Mathew 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: How special to see something with your own eyes!

Sometimes when you are present for a very special event it makes an impression on one's mind and heart that will last a lifetime. Sometimes certain events are witnessed by only a very few people. It may be that things simply worked out that way. Sometimes the individuals that are at the center of that event want only those who are dear to them to share in that event, so they are especially invited to be present. I hope that when that happens in your life, you will recognize the honor and privilege that has been extended to you. That occasion might be a wedding or a baptism or a graduation or a special anniversary. Often the event is more important for the one individual than for those attending, but we attend because we care for that person who was thought enough of us to want us to be there. Other times the event is so special, so significant that the people attending will be changed simply by being witnesses of that event; the birth of one's child may be such an event.

The event recorded in our text was a special, indeed spectacular, event in the life of Jesus. He invited three, only three of His disciples to be present to share that event with Him: Peter, James, and John.

The reaction that this evoked from Peter, an impression that must have been shared by James and John, was: --

**THEME: Lord, It is Good for Us to be Here!**

Now, if only we had a time machine so that we could be there too. But I guess we have to settle for hearing about this event from the eyewitnesses that were there, which means reading about it, and hearing about it second hand, and learning about the impression it made on them. It's like looking at the pictures of someone else's vacation to Hawaii but not being able to be there, OR is it?

We have something very special happening with us when we read of an event in Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit, who caused the inspired record to be written just as He desired it to be recorded, with accuracy AND authenticity, also works in our hearts and

minds through that record so that we share in the benefit, in the honor, in the spiritual impression that was made in the first place. This isn't virtual reality where it is almost like actually being there; this is spiritual reality in which the Spirit of God takes hold of our hearts and the Lord is here with us. We may truly exclaim with Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here --

### **I. To Observe Jesus' Divine Glory.**

Jesus took these three disciples with Him to this mountain that was located in some remote location. There they would be alone and undisturbed, and yes, even unobserved. When they came to the top of the mountain the spectacular happened. In our English translations we read that Jesus was transfigured before them, and so this Sunday of the church is referenced as Transfiguration Sunday. But what does that mean? We know our text reports, "**His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light**" (v.2). Was that all there was to it, that Jesus was brightly shining? Certainly the whiteness of Jesus' clothing and the brightness of Jesus' face were central to the change, but to be transfigured implies something more.

The Greek word is the same word from which the English word "metamorphosis" comes. And yes, when we think of metamorphosis the example that instantly comes to mind is the drab caterpillar changing into the beautiful and graceful butterfly. The change is so dramatic that one struggles to believe that the one came from the other.

So it was with Jesus. In Jesus' state of humiliation His divine majesty was set aside. It was not seen. He was indeed an ordinary looking man. However on this occasion He changed, and the divine glory and majesty dominated the scene, and the ordinary was not in evidence.

Anything more than that is mere speculation. The important lesson is that we are assured of Jesus' divine nature. When He comes again then we shall see Him as He is, and we will know the power and the wonder of what the disciples saw Jesus to be on that day.

And what more is there to say about this sight of Jesus' glory, but that it is important for us to comprehend "**the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Moses was there. Moses had seen the glory of God at Sinai. Moses was the Lord's prophet for the reception of the Old Covenant, the covenant of the law which promised, "**This do and thou shalt live**" (Luke 10:28) but also promised, "**The soul that sins shall die**" (Ezekiel 18:4)! And the glory of the most holy God was as a **consuming fire** before the Children of Israel.

On this holy mountain where Jesus was transfigured the glory of the Lord was revealed in the context of the New Covenant. In this covenant the Servant of the Lord came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luke 19:10). He revealed His glory, "**the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**" (John 1:14).

And that was the focal point of this entire incident on top of this remote mountain. And we declare with Peter: **Lord, It is Good for Us to be Here!**

## **II. To Witness the Result of Jesus' Glory.**

What does that mean, the *result* of Jesus' glory? Jesus was glorified not only in this appearance, but also in His mission of salvation. Jesus came into this world, born of a woman, the Son of God incarnate, so that He could suffer and die for the sins of the world. Yes, He came so that by His death He could redeem sinners to God, and a just God could and would declare sinners to be righteous in His sight. How do we know this is real? Because the Bible says so! How do we know that all the Old Testament promised really makes a difference for us and what that difference is?

That is what Peter, James, and John saw on the top of that holy mountain. They saw it when they saw two people who had lived many hundreds of years earlier standing with Jesus. Moses and Elijah were glorified together with Jesus. Indeed it is hard to see how it could have been any other way. Moses and Elijah, mighty prophets of old appeared in glory and were visiting with Jesus; how could it be any other way than that Jesus would appear in glory as

He visited with these two men who were glorified because of Him? Moses appeared in glory because of his faith in the promises of God. Elijah appeared in glory with Jesus because of what Jesus was going to do which delivered this man from the consequences of sin to the glory of heaven.

What did that mean to Peter, James, and John? What does it mean for you and me? The hope of glory that is found in Christ, OUR hope of glory that is found in Jesus, in His death and resurrection, is real, very real indeed. God saw redemptive work as being as good as done, even before it was done. And so Moses who believed the promises of God, and Elijah who also served the Lord in faith, received the benefit which Christ secured for them on the cross. This isn't pie in the sky dreams or empty platitudes. Moses and Elijah's appearance in glory with Jesus show the reality of our hope of everlasting life and glory with the Lord.

That is the faith which we build and nourish in Christ. For that strengthening of faith it is good for us to be there on that mountain top with the Lord, to be there --

### **III. To Hear the Father's Endorsement of His Son.**

The climax of the day was yet to come for these three disciples. Another feature of that day which highlighted Jesus' glory, and also served to further the Lord on His mission of salvation was the appearance of that bright cloud. This was not just any bright cloud that we might see with sun beams shining through, creating spectacular beauty, you know the ones that you always think of as a depiction of the God's presence. This was something more, much more. It was not only the brightness of the cloud that was overwhelming but also the voice coming from the cloud. It was the voice of God! From that cloud the Father declared: **"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him"** (v.5)! This was suddenly more glory than the three disciples could bear. They hid their faces, pressing them to the ground.

What does this teach us? Jesus is God's Son! God sent His Son into the world. John later wrote with certainty; **"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him"** (1 John 4:9). Yes, it is all about God loving underserving sinners and

saving our lives, saving our souls, saving us unto everlasting life with our Savior.

It is also clear that Jesus in His life, in His ministry, and on into His sufferings and death was doing exactly what His Father in heaven expected of Him. Jesus was fulfilling His mission of salvation perfectly.

Finally, we hear the Father's charge to us: "**Hear Him!**" Jesus is the One, the only One who can bring us to God. On the evening before His death Jesus told the disciples, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me**" (John 14:6).

The Father told us to hear Jesus. We need to pay special attention to Jesus and what He says. He is the Word made flesh. Peter concluded in our epistle lesson that the prophetic Word was made more sure by all that happened on that holy mountain. You see all the Scriptures direct us to Christ Jesus, and Jesus as the Word made flesh directs us to God. All Holy Scripture is to be seen through the light of the cross.

**"Lord, it is good for us to be here!"** As we began the sermon we talked about how this phrase can be applied to us also as we read and meditate upon the events of that Transfiguration Day so long ago. The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts that we might see Jesus' glory, that we might know that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that we might know the life and the glory that He brings to all those who believe in Him, that we might hear the Father's endorsement, and commendation so that we also hear Jesus.

And so, **Lord, it is good for us to be here**, sitting in the pew, gathered around Your Word, bowing our heads in awe and amazement at the wonder of grace and love that has come to us in our glorious Savior Jesus Christ.

**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)

