

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 27, 2022
Transfiguration Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 34:29-35, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Hymns: 359; 135; 360; 657:4

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

Sermon Text: Luke 9:28-32

²⁸ Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

²⁹ As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became white and glistening*. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. ³³ Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said.

³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" ³⁶ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

(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: Transfiguration, the last Sunday after Epiphany

The overriding theme of the epiphany season is the manifestation of Jesus' glory to the world. Jesus' glory is revealed in an assortment of different ways within the inspired record of Scripture. It was revealed in His miracles. It was revealed in His teaching. It was even revealed in how Jesus controlled events when people wanted to harm and even kill Him, but His time had not yet come. The Holy Spirit also revealed to us that Jesus' glory continues to be revealed to the world through the lives and testimony of those who believe in Him as Lord and Savior.

Our text this morning is one of the gospel accounts of Jesus being transfigured or transformed right before the eyes of three of His disciples. Without doubt the transfiguration of Jesus so that His divine glory was visible is the highlight of this Epiphany season. It is worthy of our consideration every year for the many lessons of faith it brings before us. So let us consider how --

**THEME: The Transfiguration Reveals
Jesus' Glory as Our Redeemer.**

The transfiguration assures that all should --

I. Know His Full Identity.

*“Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.
29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.”* (Luke 9:28-29)

The opening words of our text direct us back to a previous significant event. It was *“about eight days after these sayings.”* (v.28) What sayings? Eight days earlier Jesus had carefully explained to the disciples that *“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”* (Luke 9:22) Jesus explained this to them in response to Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ of God. Jesus had instructed them not to spread that

around. He gave that instruction because they didn't fully understand what that actually meant. They didn't understand who Jesus really was, even if they thought they did. They couldn't fathom why Jesus would talk about being killed, and they had no context to assimilate any instruction regarding Jesus rising from the dead. It was all "veiled" for them because of their misconceptions of what the Messiah should be. They just didn't get it.

However, what it meant to be the Messiah was very much on Jesus' mind. The time was approaching when Jesus' passion would begin. It weighed heavy on His heart. And so, He took His three closest companions, who hopefully understood these spiritual things the best, and went up a mountain to pray. We can be sure from the events that followed that we know what occupied Jesus' prayers. It was His passion. It was the intense, unimaginable ordeal that lay before Him, an ordeal necessary for the salvation of the world.

While Jesus prayed something happened to Him. Something was done to Him. Jesus was transfigured. This was not something Jesus' did to Himself. It was something that God the Father did in response to Jesus' prayer. He was transformed.

Peter, James, and John had been overcome by sleepiness. Jesus' time in prayer may have been extensive, and they were tired. But this certainly got their attention. Jesus was transformed so that He no longer appeared like a normal, regular human being. The divine nature of the eternal Son of God was shining through the humanity that the Son of God had taken upon Himself. His face shone like the sun, or like the brightness of lightning flashes. Even His clothing was impacted by the glory of the Lord!

When we consider this event, it is certainly the climax of all signs and wonders revealing the divine nature of Jesus of Nazareth. It is important for us to truly grasp this truth concerning Jesus' identity as we prepare to enter the season of Lent. We need to comprehend how great and wondrous was the love of God that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to be our Redeemer. Yes, we already know that Jesus was and is the Son of God. We confess it regularly. But then Peter and the disciples also confessed that Jesus

was the Christ of God, and they actually didn't fully get the magnitude of the truth of that statement.

That is all I am saying for us too. In fact, it really isn't possible for us to comprehend the fullness of Jesus' glory, or the magnitude of the fact of His identity. It is outside of our experience. That is why it is proper and beneficial for us to meditate on this simple sounding, but profound truth regarding our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. You can't look at His glory any more than you can stare at the sun. His holy glory would be too much for us to bear unless it be veiled by His humility.

And so that was what the disciples, as well as all the people of the Jews saw. They saw the Son of God with His glory veiled, as He humbled Himself and walked among us, the people of this world. As He did this, He presented ample evidence that all should know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He took upon Himself our flesh and blood that He might suffer and die for our salvation, and rise again for our justification and the hope of everlasting life.

That was but the beginning of the Father's answer to Jesus' prayers that night on that mountain peak, and it was certainly a powerful lesson to help us --

II. Understand Jesus' Mission Objective.

What happened next makes Jesus' mission objective much clearer. *"And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah,³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."* (Luke 9:30-31)

Moses and Elijah in glory appeared with Jesus. Now you've got to think about this for a moment because the fact that they were "***in glory***" is important. Think how and why it was possible for them to be in glory. Moses had died right before the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land, and the Lord buried Him. What happened later with Moses' body is a bit of a mystery, but we know that Satan tried to take possession of Moses' earthly remains. **(Jude 9)** But much later, there Moses was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Along with Moses was the Prophet Elijah, a

great prophet of Israel who served in difficult circumstances. At the end of Elijah's earthly sojourn, he was taken up directly into heaven in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire. He also appeared **in glory** with Jesus on that mountain top. They appeared in glory to speak with Jesus, and so Jesus also was transformed that His glory was evident. They couldn't appear more glorious than their Lord and Redeemer. That just couldn't be!

The situation begs a couple of questions that are significant for us. How was it possible for Moses and Elijah to appear in glory? Second, why should they appear in glory with Jesus on that mountain top? The answer is really the same. It all has to do with why Jesus was praying, and how the Father in heaven responded to Jesus' prayer. It was all about Jesus' impending death. It was all about what Jesus' departure from this life, from this world was going to accomplish. Jesus' death was to be the all-atoning sacrifice for sin. Jesus' death was payment for the sins of the world for all time. Jesus' death was payment for the sins of Moses and Elijah. Jesus' death and resurrection which was all about to happen in Jerusalem was what made it possible for Moses and Elijah to appear in glory.

As they talked with Jesus about His sufferings and death, they stood with Jesus as exhibits of what His death and resurrection would accomplish. In a sense it was a preview of the glory of all those who were to be saved and ultimately enter into glory. It was a beginning of what Isaiah foretold in his 53rd chapter: *"When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."* (Isaiah 53:10)

For His encouragement Jesus was shown the results of His passion, the glory that would be given to underserving sinners through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the pleasure of the Lord that prospered in Jesus' hand!

And that is what this means for us as well. The Apostle John, who was there on that mountain and witnessed this glorious scene, writes about **us** in his first epistle: *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall*

see Him as He is. ³ *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* (1 John 3:2-3) We cannot even begin to imagine the glory that awaits us, not because of our merit, but only because of Jesus and what He endured in His Passion, and what He accomplished for us in Jerusalem. And then the Holy Spirit called us to faith that we might enter into glory and forever be with the Lord!

Now, for the final act of God that also had the double purpose of encouraging Jesus on His mission and leading us to proper devotion to Jesus that we might --

III. Listen to Him.

Right when Peter was exclaiming how it was good for them to be there, and how he would like to make that moment last by building shelters for them to stay in, God the Father presented one more important message into the scene. *“While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud.* ³⁵ *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”* ³⁶ *When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.”* (Luke 9:34-36)

The Father’s endorsement of Jesus as His Son is important for all the world. It was important for Jesus to hear as well. Not that He didn’t know full well and was confident in His identity as the eternal Son of God, but also as an encouragement for the fulfillment of the difficult task that lay before Him. He was God’s Son, and the Father was with Him and endorsed Jesus with those words of instruction that all should HEAR HIM!

Listen to Jesus. How important is it for us to abide in Jesus’ Word, to listen to Him, to really hear what the Word has to say, and for us to understand the **authority** of Jesus’ Word. The glory that awaits us in heaven comes to us through faith in Jesus. **Hear Him!** Hear Him and believe as the Holy Spirit uses Jesus’ Word to call us to faith.

Hear Him and find strength for life. While we are making our way through this pilgrimage of life, we will face many challenges to our faith. Trials and tribulation and persecution abound in the life

of every Christian. In those day of grief and pain where do we find strength to endure unto the end? We find it in the Word of the Lord. We find it in the cross of Christ. We see there the greatest act of His love for us. We know that while it is true that *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God,”* (Acts 14:22) we also know *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18)

Perseverance unto the end is not accomplished by our strength, or wisdom, or resolve. And our faith will be challenged both by the wiles of the devil as well as the influence e of the world. Remember we need to *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8) We need to be on our guard against the ideas of this world. We are warned: *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

(Colossians 2:8)

How can we resist the devil? How can we outsmart the world with its appealing philosophy? **Hear Him!** Listen to Jesus! Listen to **Jesus**, NOT the world, and reject the enticement to sin the devil lays before us.

It is the Lord’s desire that we also be received into glory. To that end and purpose, He gave His only begotten Son. (John 3:16) He sent Jesus to the cross that sinners subject to death and eternal condemnation might be saved and restored to glory with the Lord. So, Jesus faced what lay before Him, and Moses and Elijah stood with Him as evidence of the effectiveness of the sacrifice He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. God the Father directs us to Jesus and **only** Jesus as our source of life and salvation.

Starting this coming Wednesday we shall again begin our annual trek into the passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we treasure the wonder of grace and love that is revealed in the depths of Jesus’ humiliation, and His sufferings, death, and His resurrection. Hear Him, and you shall share in His glory for all eternity.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.