

The Transfiguration of our Lord – 2023

Exodus 24:8-18

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

Peter, James, and John didn't know what was about to happen. Obedient, faithful, and supremely devoted, they followed the Lord Christ up the mountain. These men are not perfect. In fact, Peter had made a colossal mistake not long prior to this journey up the mountain. Some folks, out of empathy, attempt to put the best construction on Peter rebuking Jesus. Some will say: "Love made Peter say it. Peter didn't want to see Jesus hurt." Did Jesus see it that way? Jesus gave Peter a verbal wallop. The Lord knew where Peter's words came from. "Get thee behind me, Satan, for you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). "You are a hindrance to me." Peter was alarmed, horrified at the thought that Jesus would suffer at the hands of the chief priests, the scribes, and be killed. "Never Lord, this shall never happen to you." The thought of the cross was repugnant to Peter.

How many of y'all believe that God teaches us – about Himself, about life, about love and sacrifice and truth and obedience? How many of y'all enjoy learning, no matter how hard the lesson? How many of y'all enjoy being taught, enjoy an enhanced view of life in this world after having learned what the Lord teaches? Some things we have to unlearn. Our prejudices, worldly philosophies, the vain impulses of our sinful flesh – unlearning isn't always easy. If your hands are full of something that you've held onto for a very long time and Jesus is extending His pierced hand to you for you to grasp, you have to drop whatever it is you're holding. You old folks, are you still malleable clay in the Potter's hands or have you already learned everything that He has to teach you? Wisdom, love, humility, and the theological intricacies of how God is at work in this world – our lives are enriched by Christ teaching us, guiding us, are they not?

The Teacher took Peter, James and John up a mountain to show them His glory. That is the lesson, His glory. True God and true man in one person, Jesus unveils that He is the Messianic King, the promised Christ, the Word made flesh. Glory; the disciples were overwhelmed, rattled with fear, terrified of what such holiness would do to them. Previously, when Peter first recognized that Jesus was no ordinary man, he begged that Jesus would go away from him. It was after the miraculous catch of fish. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). No; that is not God's way. How many of y'all have felt unworthy, out of place, in God's presence. How many of you have stayed away from this Divine Service because you felt that way? Have you ever been ashamed to come to church, ashamed to come into His presence? I suspect that most of us are familiar with having let someone down and not being able to look them in the eye. Have you ever gone through that? It's not pleasant. But think of it... has Jesus ever scorned you, turned His back on you? He took your sin. He loved you as He took your sin. That's where His glory is.

On the Mountain, He was transfigured. Jesus appearance was changed but only His appearance. Wherever He goes and whatever He looks like, He is God of God and Light of Light. On the mountain, He displayed it. His face shone like the sun because He is the Light of the world, the great I AM. His clothes became white as light because divine righteousness is His perpetual garment. Moses and Elijah are with Him. Dead Moses and dead Elijah, heaven's company, they

are conversing with the Christ about what He would accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Sacrifice, redemption, a defeat of death and a crushing of the serpent's head. Jesus' death and resurrection is an exodus – we who were bound to the devil and his tyranny are delivered. The Lamb of God would deliver us out of a land of slavery and death and bring us to the Promised Land. That's what they were talking about. Blood and cross and sacrifice and resurrection and forgiveness and triumph and church and grace and a kingdom that will not end. Glory; it belongs to Jesus and He wills for it to be seen by Peter, James, John... and you.

Do you trust the eyes of your heart? Do you trust what God has taught you to see? How deep is your Christianity? What do you long to see? The Bright cloud overshadowed the mountain and a voice, the Father's voice, came bounding out of it and the words penetrated their souls: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). When He speaks to you of His glory being tied to His suffering on the cross – listen to Him. When He tells you that His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink – listen to Him. When He tells you that your sins are forgiven – listen to Him. When He tells you that He will return, when He tells you that His sheep hear His voice, when He tells you to love your enemies, when He tells you to pray for those who persecute you, listen to Him. His glory is tied up in all those things. His glory is put before you in His Word, now, in this contemporary era. His glory is tethered inextricably to His cross and His cross has so many dimensions. Listen to Him.

Up that mountain, Mt. Calvary, the Lord trudged. We are given the impression that only John followed. The other disciples abandoned Him. What did they trust? What were they holding onto? What did they refuse, in their weakness, to let go of? After Peter denied Jesus the third time, the cock crowed, and Jesus looked straight at him. How hard was that lesson? Do you suspect that Peter remembered that lesson? Do you suspect that that lesson enriched Peter's life? Glory; it is the cross. It is never away from the cross. Glory; it is never, ever going to diminish. The cross of Christ is the most glorious thing this planet has ever known. That glory is with us. Has the Lord taught you to see His glory in His body and His blood? Has the Lord taught you to see His glory as the church makes disciples of all nations? Has the Lord taught you that as you forgive others you show yourself to be His disciple and His cross, His glory are present and active?

Do you know what is in your future? I don't know what is in mine. I know that I am in the Lord's hands. I know that I will die. I know that Christ will be with me. I know that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life and no one can snatch me out of His hands. I know that heaven is my home. I know that I'm going there. Still, I don't know what lessons He will teach me. But I do know that He *will* teach me. I know that He *will* teach you. I know that He will show you His glory. His glory will not come how the world thinks it will come. His cross, His suffering and death – He will show it to you over and over and over. It is here, now. Sinners are drawn to this place because His glory fills this holy house and it fills His unworthy servants. Word and Sacrament and Song and Font and Pulpit and Altar and Confession and Absolution and Liturgy and Invocation and Benediction and Angels and Archangels and All the Company of Heaven – God's glory permeates this place, this moment, this assembly. Has He taught you to see it? Has He taught you to rejoice in it?

When Jesus told the disciples what it meant to be the Christ, when He told them that He must suffer and die, He also told them that on the third day He would be raised (Matthew 16:21). When they left the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what had happened until after the Son of Man is raised from the dead (Matthew 17:9). Do you know what we are going to learn more and more about until we die? The resurrection; I want to learn more about the resurrection, what it means, how deeply it defines us, how its power is among us, how free from death we truly are. Do you want to learn, with me, of Christ's resurrection? Then walk with me through Lent. He is going to teach us.