

Transfiguration – Vicar Anderson sermon
St. Matthew 17:1-9 “The Foretaste of What is to Come.”
January 29th, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Prayer: O Almighty and everlasting God, whose blessed Son revealed Himself to His chosen Apostles when He was transfigured on the holy mount, and amidst the excellent glory spoke with Moses and Elijah of His departure which He should accomplish at Jerusalem: Grant to us Your servants, that, beholding the brightness of His countenance, we may be strengthened to bear the cross, and be changed into His likeness from glory to glory; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Parish Prayers, ed. Frank Colqhoun, p. 137)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 17th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who with three witnesses transfigured in all His glory, showing the World that He is the Christ, the Son of God, dear fellow redeemed:

We are currently in the last two games to see who will be playing in the Superbowl. I have had fun with the banter of talking with everyone as we cheered on our favorite teams and saw them lose out before the big game or didn’t make it to the playoffs at all. Now each one of these playoff games, especially the two that will play today are just a foretaste of what is to come. It’s good to win these playoff games, but not as good as tasting the ultimate win of that Superbowl. It’s an event like this that we see in our text today. Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah and He does it in an extraordinary way. Jesus takes three disciples with Him to witness this event. They don’t even realize what they see with their eyes. There are some key points to take away from this event. This is a high point in Jesus’ life before He continues to follow the will of His Father and heads to the cross for our salvation.

Peter, James, and John witness something beyond all human comprehension. Upon going up the mountain, Jesus shows His divine glory. Scripture has a hard time saying what this scene looked like, it is indescribable. Matthew’s account keeps it the simplest. Jesus became as bright as the sun and His clothes became as bright as a light. Two of the greatest figures of the Old Testament arrive and talk with Jesus. We see the Old Testament affirming that it is pointing at

Jesus as the Messiah. Moses is representing the law. Elijah is representing the prophets. The topic that they are discussing is how Jesus is going to die. Just after this, a bright cloud overshadowed them. Not only has the Son of Man shown himself that He is truly the Son of God with His divine glory, The Father has also come upon the mountain confirming what is taking place. That Jesus is His beloved Son, and the Son is going to carry out His plan to save the world. The disciples fell on their faces in fear.

As God the Father envelops them in a cloud, what are the disciples thinking? This is not the first time that the glory of the LORD has been witnessed in a cloud. We see God appearing in a cloud in the Old Testament. It is recorded that, *"On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled... Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire"* (Exodus 19:16, 18). The disciples have a big reason to fear. They grew up learning these accounts and here is the LORD Almighty coming down on their mountain. The LORD who delivered Israel out of Egypt. This is a glory that cannot be looked upon. When the LORD came down on Mount Sinai, the people were told they could not look upon him. The Israelites couldn't even touch the base of the mountain. This is a glory that reminds people of their sin. They see how mighty and how holy the LORD is. We see how tiny we are.

Let's put it into perspective. What if the cloud of the LORD filled this church right now? You see His glory around you. What sins begin to come to mind as the bright presence of God fills the church? You would squirm in your seat. Like the Old Testament Israelites and these three disciples, you would fall down in fear at the glorious presence of God. You would want to hide. In that cloud we see God's omnipotence. God knows everything that we do. We cannot hide from his presence. Our sins are laid bare in front of God the Almighty. This is happening now – we just can't see it. God is present right here in this church. He does see everything. God is here and knows every single sin that has been committed against Him. You can't hide from God. You have to come clean. As the presence of God can overwhelm us, Jesus' transfiguration did not happen to scare us.

Before the transfiguration, Peter made his great confession. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus shows Peter, James, and John that Peter's great confession is true as they get a foretaste of Jesus' glory. He is the Christ. Everything that His disciple's thought is true. Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus confirming that he will die for the sins of the world. This was the plan that He was sent into the world to complete. We see that Jesus is able to complete it because He is not just a man. The disciples see his glory. They see His glory shining like the Sun. God the Father confirms that what Jesus is doing is pleasing to Him. This plan has been set in stone since the beginning of time. God is keeping His promise. He is watching His Son willingly follow His plan to perfection. The fear of the cloud is gone as Jesus is the one who takes on the weight of the wrath of God. That is where Jesus is heading after leaving this mountain. He is heading to the cross, bearing the weight of the sins that have us in fear, and He is taking the wrath that we deserved.

Now as the disciples were laying down in fear, the scene ends. They hear the voice of their Savior. Jesus comforts his disciples that they don't need to fear as he is still with them. He comforts you as well. He hides His glory from you as He comes to meet you in His Word and Sacraments. His Word brings you comfort as it tells you what He has done. You hear Jesus'

Words of comfort as He is with you in your struggles and hardships. He clothes you with the waters of Baptism marking you as God's child. The forgiveness of sins is given to you on your tongue in Holy Communion. Your Savior knows that you can't endure Him in all His glory because of your sins. So, He comes to you in the simplest yet majestic way. You don't have to search for a way out of the problems that you are in. Jesus comes to you and says do not be afraid as He is the one who takes on the punishment. The ways in which Jesus comes to you are also a foretaste of what is to come, and you can look forward to what the disciples witnessed.

Jesus' transfiguration is the foretaste of being with Him forever in all His glory. Jesus never lost His power as God. He always had it, but He did not always make full use of it. We see in our text how much He gave up for you. The disciples see what Christ's resurrection, earthly appearance, ascension, and what heaven will look like. This is what will happen after He dies. Jesus rises from the dead glorified, making full use of His divine power. Peter writes in his letter that they were witnesses to what took place. Peter says, *"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty"* (2 Peter 1:16). The Bible is not a book of made-up fairy tales.

The disciples watched as their teacher dropped the veil, giving them a glimpse of His divine glory. They witnessed Jesus staying on course to complete the Father's will. Moses and Elijah assure Jesus of the plan for Him to suffer and die. This was God's plan since the beginning of time. That Christ would come into the world to suffer and die for you. He would humbly live the life of a servant, live a perfect life obeying everything that the Father commanded for you.

This account speaks about the future as well. When our final hour comes and we are called to our heavenly home, we not only will see Christ in all his glory, we will also be transfigured. We will see the glory of Christ, and we will have no fear. The apostle John who was a witness to these things explains how this will look. He records in one of his letters the joy that we will have in our heavenly home. That we will be comforted by Christ in His full glory. He writes, *"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2). Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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