

Sermon for February 15, 2015 - Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-9 (NIV84)

Theme: Jesus' Divine Glory Is Revealed . . .

- 1) *in the radiance of His being.*
- 2) *through the testimony of the prophets*
- 3) *by the declaration of His Father.*

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God, your Savior? "What a silly question," you might be thinking, "of course I believe this. Why else would I be in church?"

The reason I asked is because, even though we may verbally confess our faith in Jesus, there are times when we – like the disciples – don't really understand the implication of our confession. Let me explain what I mean:

Six days before our sermon text took place, Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was. Answering for all of them, Peter said: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (Mat 16:16 NIV84) Jesus called Peter blessed for being able to make such a confession about him, and then went on to tell the disciples how he would suffer, die and rise again to accomplish their salvation. Peter didn't want to hear this and even tried to rebuke Jesus for saying such things – showing that He really didn't fully understand what his confession meant.

Like Peter, we willingly confess Jesus as the Son of God and our Savior, but we don't always understand what that means. I mean, if we would fully take our confession to heart, we would never worry or get upset about anything. Like Peter, we need our faith strengthened - and this is exactly what Jesus wants to do for us today as we meditate on Mark's account of His Transfiguration, under the theme: **Jesus' Divine Glory Is Revealed . . .** 1) *in the radiance of His being,* 2) *through the testimony of the prophets and,* 3) *by the declaration of His Father.*

Part One: Jesus divine glory is revealed . . . in the radiance of His being.

Jesus was certainly happy that Peter confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God; but He was also troubled with the misunderstanding Peter had concerning what that confession meant. The disciples seemed to think that Jesus came to establish an eternal earthly kingdom. They filled their imaginations with such visions of earthly glory and grandeur that they closed their ears whenever Jesus talked about the true nature of His work: namely that He came to suffer and die on the cross in order to win our salvation.

Jesus needed his disciples to understand exactly what their confession meant. Why? Because Jesus knew that, after his resurrection and ascension, the disciples would face severe persecution. If they continued in their false notions about his nature and work, they would easily despair and fall from faith. This is why he took three of his disciples (who would later become leaders in the church) to experience his glory that they might encourage the rest of the disciples when days of persecution would arise.

And so: *After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.*

Like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, Jesus' body underwent a wonderful transformation. Glorious light seemed to emanate from every cell in his body, showing forth a purity that only the LORD himself could possess. Jesus radiated with such divine beauty that *Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

Yes, it was good to be with Jesus on that mountain and, oh, how Peter wished it could last forever! The sinless purity. The peace. The wonderful beauty of being with Jesus in all his glory – it is this our souls long for, as Saint Augustine once confessed to the LORD: "You have made us for yourself, and the heart never rest until it finds its rest in You."

Sadly, for these three disciples, this sight was merely temporary. God was giving them an important glimpse of Jesus' divine glory so that they could strengthen others when troubled days would come.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: it is important for us to see Jesus' glory through Peter's eyes. Why? So we too can be convinced that Jesus is the almighty Son of God and, with eager anticipation, look forward to the glory that is awaiting us on the last day. We face tough times on this earth. People laugh at us for believing that "some guy" who lived 2000 years ago is our God. And, let's be honest, when the world laughs at us for our faith, aren't we tempted to wonder and question what we believe? Is Jesus really the true God? Will he really protect me throughout my life, and deliver me safely to his heavenly kingdom?

And this is where the account of Jesus' transfiguration comes in: Yes, Jesus really is the almighty Son of God! Three eyewitnesses saw Jesus reveal his divine glory in the radiance of his being! They had a foretaste of heaven. Because of this we can be confident that God's promises are real. We are convinced that He will keep every single one of them. Hold on to Jesus in faith – for God will grant us the eternal peace our hearts so restlessly desire.

Part Two: Jesus divine glory is revealed . . . through the testimony of the prophets

A very important aspect of Jesus transfiguration was the appearance of Moses and Elijah – two great prophets who represented the Old Testament Scriptures. The Gospel of Luke tells us that these men spoke with Jesus *about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.* (Luk 9:31 NIV84)

Do you remember the problem Peter had six days before Jesus' transfiguration? As I mentioned in the beginning of the sermon, Peter did not want to hear Jesus talk about his impending suffering and death. That went against all the earthly glory He imagined for the Christ.

What a gracious blessing it was, then, for Peter to hear Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus about His impending suffering, death and resurrection. This conversation illustrates the truth that the purpose of the

Old Testament Scriptures was to prepare God's people for the sacrifice that the Christ would make on their behalf in order to rescue them from their slavery to sin - offering them, thereby, the righteousness they need to be considered children of God.

I don't know if Peter, at the time, understood the meaning of Moses' and Elijah's discussion with Jesus about his departure, but later on He would get it, as demonstrated by what He wrote in his first Epistle: *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.* (1Pe 1:10-11 NIV84)

Christ's suffering, death and resurrection for our salvation is the focal point of all Scripture! It is Jesus' highest glory and the whole reason He took on human flesh and blood. This is what God wants us to focus our attention on, but do we?

I don't think we can say we always do. A lot of times we (like the disciples) focus too much on the here and now. The disciples wanted Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom where they could live trouble-free lives in all glory. And, don't we often want something similar: a Christ who can help us make good, practical decisions so that we can live a healthy, happy life on this earth. Pastors are asked to make sermons more relevant to modern life. "Why do we need to study about the people who lived long ago? Just tell me what I need to know for today so that I can have a happy life and secure eternity."

Now it is true that the LORD most certainly does care for our bodies as well as our souls, but He didn't send his Son to give us a "happy life" on this earth. No, he sent Jesus to be our Savior from sin. He sent Jesus to secure our eternal future with Him in heaven.

Jesus revealing his divine glory through the testimony of Moses and Elijah reminds us that the Bible is not some "self-help" book, showing us the way to earthly security and happiness. No, it is God's Word that shows us our sins, and – more importantly – shows us our Savior, and what He did to restore the relationship we lost with God. The LORD has something far better in mind for us than a good life on this earth. He wants us to have a glorious eternity with Him in His Kingdom. This is why He points us to His Son, and what He came to do for us. This is why He wants us to listen to him.

Part Three: Jesus' Divine Glory Is Revealed . . . by the declaration of His Father.

We read: *Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

The main problem Peter had in accepting Jesus' work as the Christ stems from not listening to Jesus. If Peter would have just set aside his own ideas and opinions as to what the Christ would come and do, he would have heard Jesus' gracious words about the resurrection. He could have asked Jesus good questions about his work and the salvation it would bring. By listening to Jesus Peter could have grown in faith and understanding. But Peter was impetuous. His false ideas closed his mind to the wonderful beauty God the Father was trying to reveal to him about his good confession.

Perhaps it was for this reason God the Father appeared in the cloud – testifying to the fact that Jesus was indeed his Son whom He loves. Listen to Him!

And then, to emphasize our need to listen to Jesus only, we read: *Suddenly, when [the disciples] looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is so easy to be like Peter – allowing our own preconceived notions about Jesus and what his work ought to be that we fail to actually listen to His Word. This is why it is important for us to take to heart what God the Father said on the mount of Transfiguration: Jesus is His beloved Son, sent to save fallen mankind from his sin. Listen to him!

In other words: Don't assume you know all that you need to know about Jesus. Don't assume you don't need to read the Bible any more or come to Bible class because you learned it all as a kid going through Christian day school. What God the Father told Peter, James and John, he also tells us: Listen to Him! Study the Scriptures since they point to Christ. Prayerfully meditate on God's Word – asking the Holy Spirit to prevent your own ideas and preconceived notions from hearing what Jesus has to say. Then you will soon see what kind of Christ your precious Jesus is: not one who came to give you a good life now, but one who came to pay for each and every one of your sins that separated you from God. He calls you to repent and turn to him for forgiveness. And, as you hold on to him in faith, He promise to watch over every aspect of your life, working in all things for your eternal good.

Take comfort in Christ transfiguration – the event in which **Jesus divine glory was revealed** *in the radiance of His being, through the testimony of the prophets and, by the declaration of His Father.* May this revelation lead you to always listen to Jesus. Hold into him in faith as your Savior from sin, and look forward to the divine, eternal glory Jesus' transfiguration gave us a mere glimpse of. May the promise of this glory lead us to pray: Amen, come Lord Jesus. Amen.