

Transfiguration Sunday
Feb. 23, 2020
Mark 9:2-9

In Christ Jesus, our Glorified Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

With this morning's worship service the Epiphany season draws to a close. We stand at the threshold of the season of Lent, the season of Jesus' ultimate humiliation and sacrifice. But before we see Jesus in His suffering and torment, in His pain and punishment, in His death and damnation the Lord gives us a very rare and amazing glimpse of the glory which He hid so carefully even while He was revealing it through His words and actions. Only once in all the 33 years of His life did Jesus ever appear like this--in His full blown glory as God.

Our text tells us, **NOW AFTER SIX DAYS JESUS TOOK PETER, JAMES AND JOHN, AND LED THEM UP ON A HIGH MOUNTAIN APART BY THEMSELVES; AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM. HIS CLOTHES BECAME SHINING, EXCEEDINGLY WHITE, LIKE SNOW, SUCH AS NO LAUNDERER ON EARTH CAN WHITEN THEM.** Jesus took His three closest disciples with Him up the mountain to pray. No doubt the thought of His impending suffering and death was constantly on His mind. This is what He had come into the world to do. Filled with these thoughts Jesus withdrew from the large crowds of people into this solitary mountain place to lay all before His Father in prayer. But while He is praying a remarkable thing happens. Jesus is transfigured; His appearance is changed. Matthew writes, **"His face began to shine like the sun and His clothes became as white as light."** Our text from Mark tells us that His clothes began to shine, exceedingly white, like snow, whiter than anyone could bleach them. Luke tells us that Jesus' robe became white and glistening; literally: like a flash of lightening.

What was happening? Were the disciples hallucinating or dreaming? Perhaps the mountain light air and lack of oxygen affected the disciples so they saw strange sights? No, they really saw the dazzling splendor of the glory of God. As God the Son, Jesus had this divine glory from eternity. The glory also belonged to His human nature because of the communion of attributes as we have seen in His miracles. But it was hidden by His human flesh, until now!

Now His glory shone through His humanity. Thirty years later Peter would write, **FOR WE DID NOT FOLLOW CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLES WHEN WE MADE KNOWN TO YOU THE POWER AND COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BUT WERE EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY. FOR HE RECEIVED FROM GOD THE FATHER HONOR AND GLORY WHEN SUCH A VOICE CAME TO HIM FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY: THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. AND WE HEARD THIS VOICE WHICH CAME FROM HEAVEN WHEN WE WERE WITH HIM ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN.** John also wrote in His Gospel, **AND WE BEHELD (WE SAW) HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.** Paul tells us **FOR IN HIM (CHRIST) DWELLS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY.**

During Jesus' life here on earth, He emptied Himself of the use of His divine glory except for performing miracles in loving service to others. His humanity covered over and hid His divine glory. Until this one special day, this one special moment in time when the divine glory shone right through His human flesh, yes, even affecting the very clothes that He was wearing. Why did this happen?

Our theme this morning tells us.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS HELPS US UNDERSTAND OUR SAVIOR.

- 1. IT REVEALS HIS HEAVENLY NATURE.**
- 2. IT ANTICIPATES HIS AGONIZING DEATH.**
- 3. IT FORESHADOWS HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.**

So how does this event help us understand our Savior? How did it help the disciples? First they were able to see with their own eyes the glory, the heavenly nature that the Son of God had before His conception and birth as a human being. They could also see the glory that each of them would someday receive as believing children of God trusting alone in Him.

Jesus' transfiguration really prepares us for a proper observance of the Lenten Season. It reminds us of who He is: The GOD-man. When the Bible says Jesus was transfigured it means His body was transformed from its normal, earthly state into a glorious, heavenly state. When the disciples saw it, they knew it in an instant: This was no mere mortal man standing before them. This was the very Son of GOD!

Why was that important? Remember, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem where He would be arrested and put to death by crucifixion. He knew that when His disciples would see it, they'd be tempted to doubt the truthfulness of His Messianic claims: "We were hoping He was the One who would redeem Israel. I guess we made a mistake." On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus assured them most visibly: "No need to doubt it! I am who I told you I am!"

Does the deity of Jesus hold importance for you and me today? Absolutely. Only a Savior who is GOD and man could function as our Savior. Only He could do what needed to be done to set things right between us and God. Sin isn't the minor flaw many think it is. It's a deadly cancer on the soul, so serious that no one afflicted with it is able to draw near to God, much less live in His presence in heaven. It was with the seriousness of our sin-sickness in mind that GOD'S SON took the extreme measure to rescue us. Nothing short of becoming one of us, living a holy life in our place, and shedding His blood on the cross as our sin-bearing substitute could bring us peace with our God.

This is what we'll be reminded of during the upcoming Lenten Season. We'll see the seriousness of our sins. The awfulness of it all. We'll also see the indescribable love of God's Son, Jesus, who volunteered to shed HIS blood for our sake. It may seem strange to hear it said -- "God purchased me to be His own with HIS blood" -- but it's true! This is the heart of the Christian Gospel. Luther wrote, "The blood of Christ is such a precious and priceless treasure that no human tongue can describe its value. Indeed, one drop of blood of the innocent Lamb of God would have been sufficient to atone for the sins of the world, yes, not only of one, but thousands of worlds"

During the next 6 weeks we will be reading the Passion (Suffering) History of our Savior. We will hear of all that Jesus had to endure for us. By remembering this Transfiguration event we will be reminded over and over again that the One who was enduring all of this torment, suffering, agony and pain for us was the Glorified Savior, the Son of God in human flesh and blood. He was not being defeated in His suffering; He was not losing to Satan and death in His crucifixion. He had to endure all of this in order to win, in order to earn for us the perfect glory of heaven. Praise the Lord!

2. IT ANTICIPATES HIS AGONIZING DEATH.

In a short time these same disciples who saw this splendor, glory and majesty would see Jesus black and blue; bloodied, bound and beaten; mocked and spit upon, helplessly led like a common criminal to the cross to suffer the crucifixion. It would then be important to remember back to this moment and recollect that it had to be this way. That this was the only way for man's sins to be paid for in full.

From Luke's account we are told that Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about **HIS DECEASE WHICH HE WAS ABOUT TO ACCOMPLISH AT JERUSALEM**. No doubt Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about the many, many Old Testament prophecies over the past 4,000 years that said it had to happen this way; that this had to take place; that He had to suffer and die for all, for He is the only Savior, the only Perfect Substitute, the only Atoning Sacrifice for sinful mankind. This helped Peter, James and John better understand their Savior and His ministry.

We, too, not only better understand our Savior, but we also are better prepared for our Savior's passion; His death and the damnation that He experienced when His Father forsook Him.

3. IT FORESHADOWS HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.

By witnessing Jesus' transfiguration these disciples should remember that this same beaten and crucified Savior would break death's hold and with that same glory He displayed on the mountain He would destroy sin, vanquish death and conquer Satan. We better understand our Savior because His transfiguration foreshadows His glorious resurrection.

So what do we learn from this lesson? We learn that Jesus came to earth for us. Out of His great love for us, He took upon Himself our flesh and blood, because our flesh and blood was contaminated with sin. We could never remove sin's stain. We cannot satisfy God's justice or pay for even one misdeed. On our own we would never hear the Father say about us, "This is my beloved son or daughter, in whom I am well pleased." Rather we deserve to hear the Father say, "Depart

from me you cursed sinner. You have broken my laws time and time again. You are lost and condemned. You deserve eternal suffering and pain.”

But what wonderful comfort and strength we too gain from this event. We see what we will be like in heaven because of what Jesus has done for us? No more mortal flesh and blood that is susceptible to sin, pain, death, suffering and damnation. We will be glorified and stand face to face with our perfect Savior reflecting His glory and splendor throughout all eternity, just like Moses and Elijah. Not because of who we are, or what we have done, but because of who Jesus is and what He has done for us. We will be clothed in His righteousness and receive the victory over death and hell. That is what awaits all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

What a comfort that is for every Christian when the burdens of life and the temptations of this world close in and weigh heavy. When we are tempted to forfeit our soul for the riches and pleasures of the moment, when we are tempted to forsake Christ and the Christian way of life and give free reign to our sinful desires. When we do what we want to do, no matter what God's Word says, so that we will be happy and then we deceive ourselves into thinking that that is what God wants for us too. Look at the splendor and the glory that is ours! Don't throw it away. Don't forfeit it for momentary selfish pleasure or sinful desire. Jesus warns us, **FOR WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSES HIS OWN SOUL?**

It is no wonder that Peter said, **RABBI, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE;** away from the sinful influence of the world, away from the worries, cares and burdens of our everyday life, away from the sorrow, grief and daily grind that we all have to face. Let's stay here forever and live in this peaceful bliss up on this mountain with you and Moses and Elijah. Wouldn't that be great? **YES, YES IT WILL!** But not **NOW! NOT YET!** Jesus had His mission to fulfill, to live and to die for all of mankind. Peter had his life to live for Jesus and his life to give for Jesus. Scripture clearly says, **WE MUST THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION (MANY HARDSHIPS) ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** But the Scriptures also say, **OUR PRESENT SUFFERINGS AND HARDSHIPS ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US.**

It is also good for us to be here, in God's house, in Christ's presence, **LISTENING TO HIM.** God the Father said, **THIS IS MY BELOVED SON. LISTEN TO HIM!** He alone has the words of life. He is the Bread of life from whom we alone can feed our hungry and thirsty souls. No one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son reveals Him through His Word. Through His Word alone can we be led to Jesus who is the **WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.** If we do not **LISTEN TO HIM** we are lost. It is good for us to be here!

Suddenly it was over. The dazzling splendor was gone, Moses and Elijah had disappeared. The cloud had vanished. There was no one but Jesus. No one but Jesus! In view of what the Father had said--that was enough. **ONLY JESUS** is all we need! By keeping our eyes of faith, our hearts upon Him and His Word we have all that we need.

LISTEN TO HIM! the Father declares to us today. And today, this morning we are listening to Him, by hearing His Word. What about tomorrow and the next day? What about this coming Wednesday evening and throughout the Lenten season when we once again have the special opportunity to listen to God's Word tell us what Jesus has done for us? Will we be listening to our Savior's Passion History? What about the rest of our lives when we have the blessed privilege and opportunity to walk with Jesus in His Word in our daily family and private devotions? We experience some of the same splendor of Christ's glory every time we read His Word and the Spirit works through it upon our hearts. The great thing about listening to Jesus is that He always **SPEAKS THE TRUTH, HE ALWAYS PROVIDES THE NEEDED REMEDY,** and His words have the **POWER and the ABILITY TO WORK!** That cannot be said of any other source of help.

Peter tried to bring the joy and glory of heaven down to earth by building three tabernacles and remaining forever up on the mountain. That was impossible. We also cannot remain in God's House forever here on earth, we need to leave from here and take that same glory of God's Word out to others--to go out into the world and reveal a crucified and now glorified, resurrected Christ to a dying world--to go out and proclaim Jesus' words; **IN ME YOU HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION; BUT BE OF GOOD CHEER, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.**

Amen.