

Jesus Shows His Glory

Matthew 17:1-9 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray,

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sometimes you just need that little bit of encouragement and strength to keep you heading towards the finish line. The race is dragging you down, making you weary. When the end is not in sight, when it doesn't seem attainable, that's when it's easiest to give up. If you can just imagine the glory of the end, the accomplishment of your goal, then you can make it through your present struggle. In our Gospel reading from Matthew chapter 17, the disciples James, John, and Peter receive that little bit of encouragement. After traveling with Jesus for these past two years, seeing him preaching, teaching, and healing, they had learned from him that he would have to die. All this work from him would end; and it would end in a shameful way. It would end with him suffering at the hands of the religious leaders and authorities, those who have been opposed to him from the beginning. They had also learned that it wasn't just our Lord who was going to suffer; he had called all his disciples to take up their own crosses in order to follow after him. You can just imagine the moment when the disciples' hearts became heavy, when their knees became weak, when they might have thought, "How could we possibly make it through this?"

Yet, our Lord Jesus does not leave them in this weary state. Even when he said that he must suffer, he also promised that on the third day he would be raised from the dead. Even though he asks you to deny yourself and take up your cross in order to follow him, he also promises eternal life to those who follow after him. And after he has spoken all these things, he gives these three disciples a special vision as he is transfigured before them on the mountain. He gives them a vision of his post-resurrection glory. He shows them his amazing power and might through the shining of his face as the sun and the brightness of his clothes. He wants them to be strengthened for the difficulties ahead; the difficulties Jesus himself will have to face; and the difficulties they will have to face. And this is true of you, beloved Christian. Our Lord gives you this sign of the transfiguration so that as you begin your journey down the mountain and to the cross, as you enter into the season of Lent, as you meditate on the holy, bitter, sufferings and death of your Lord Jesus Christ, you might have the strength and encouragement by receiving just a taste of your future glory. You might see what great vision he has awaiting those who will enjoy his resurrection. You might see that this Jesus is the one who will carry you to the end. You might see that,

JESUS GUARANTEES YOUR FUTURE GLORY BY KEEPING YOUR EYES ON HIM ONLY.

What was the glory which Jesus showed the three disciples on that mountain? It was the glory of God's own truth and light. It says, "**And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light**". The disciple received a glimpse of the God-man in his unveiled power and glory. Jesus changed his appearance before their very eyes. He did not appear to them as the regular carpenter from Nazareth; or as the humble teacher who journeyed from town to town preaching the kingdom of God. No, he appeared as the Christ, the Son of the living God. His human body was doing things impossible for anyone who wasn't truly God. His face shone with the brightness as that of the noonday sun. His clothes emanated a glow unlike any other clothes. This shows Jesus' power and might. It testifies that there is no one else as this man.

If you had any doubts that this Jesus was the one true God, the creator of the universe and your Lord, the testimony of Moses and Elijah should help to alleviate any doubts. When Jesus was transfigured before the disciples eyes, there Moses and Elijah appeared, conversing with Jesus. Both of these men of God worked tirelessly to make sure the people of God did not worship any false gods. When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai, when he was separated from the Israelites for 40 days and 40 nights, he was furious and dumbfounded to find them adoring a golden calf which they had made with their own hands. When Elijah saw how King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had led the Israelites to worship the false idol Baal, he challenged the prophets of Baal to sacrifice duel to show who was the true God. So, when you see the men of God Moses and Elijah standing there beside Jesus, be assured there is no other God in which you should trust. They are there to testify, "This is the one!"

As if this wasn't enough, the disciples also heard the testimony from God the Father's voice. When Peter desired to remain in this majesty and splendor which Jesus had arrayed on the mountain, God the Father spoke from heaven, "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**" The Father testified that this man Jesus was the Son whom he sent. This Son has the power and authority to accomplish God's will: the salvation of mankind. The vision of transfiguration confirmed for the disciples that their teacher would accomplish everything he had promised. Even if he had to first endure the shame and the scorn, he will be the one who is raised on that third day. You who stand on this side of Jesus' resurrection have the guarantee for the promises yet to be fulfilled. Our Lord who has been raised on the third day will raise you up, and grant you all the blessings he has in himself.

The blessing our Lord has in store for you in the resurrection is prefigured here already in his transfiguration. The Lord's transfiguration points to his being raised on the third day. The Lord's resurrection points to your resurrection. Your resurrection points to your transfiguration. No, you will not appear as Jesus does here before his

disciples. Your face will not shine like the sun and even your clothes will not show forth light. Yet, you will be changed. Your perishable body will become imperishable. The lightness of this life will be exchanged for the weight of heavenly glory. Your weakness now will be changed for power. All this is because of the mystery of Jesus Christ. He who has descended from heaven has come to elevate us to God's heavenly throne room. He who stood there on the mountain in front of his disciples has come so that you may be able to look at God's face and still live. This is the great transfiguration your Lord has prepared.

This transfiguration means you will enjoy communion with all of God's people before God's presence. The disciples Peter, James, and John received a foretaste of this, being in the presence of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Men they never would have met, living hundreds of years apart, now joined together because they have been lifted into the presence of Jesus. This will be your great joy, the joy of our Lord's glory. Fathers and mothers and children, reunited. Grandpas and grandmas and grandchildren, reunited. Great-great grandparents and great-great children, meeting for the first time. All the family of God brought together, standing before the warmth and delight of God's shining face.

How do you receive this glory of the resurrection, this glory of the transfiguration? How do you properly worship this true God attested by the men of God? You follow what the Father commanded from heaven concerning his Son. He said, "**Listen to him**". Listening to Jesus shows a couple of things.

One, listening confesses and shows that this man has the authority and honor to speak. You don't listen to and obey someone who you think doesn't have the right to speak. God is very concerned that you listen to him; that is why he reminds his people again and again to speak his word to one another. His word should be spoken of in your sitting down at home, in your walking and wandering throughout the day, in your lying down, and in your rising. Unfortunately, the apostle Peter needed some correction in this regard. He had not listened to Jesus. When Jesus had told his disciples that he must suffer and die, Peter had rebuked that talk. Now, when Jesus had shown a glimpse of his future glory in the transfiguration, Peter wished to stay there instead of journeying down the mountain towards the cross. Peter had said, "**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 had interrupted our Lord's conversation with Moses and Elijah. He wanted to change the brief diversion of this mountain top experience into the place where all of them would rest, disregarding the journey our Lord had to make down to Jerusalem. Peter needed that rebuke from the Father's voice; he needed the reminder to listen to Jesus, to listen to the word of the cross.

Two, listening to Jesus actually receives that which our Lord promises. Our Lord did not come down from heaven, did not become man, just to give you rules and commandments to follow. He did do that in part, and those are for your good. But, he wanted to give you the life to actually follow his will and be his disciple. He came to give

you grace filled words that show his Father's loving heart. He came to make those words of the Father, "**this is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased**", be direct words applied to you. Jesus' whole demeanor of love and grace is shown by his reaction the the disciples falling down in fear when they heard the Father's voice from heaven. When they bowed down in worship, he spoke to them, "**Rise, have no fear.**" Through his very words our Lord raises you up, just as he did the disciples, and brings you to the place of no fear. That his goal and aim: to raise you up, to raise you up on the last day, to enjoy eternal glory in the Father's presence with all the saints.

As you continue the race of the Christian faith, our Lord continues to give you the words to sustain you along the way. If you should become weary or tired as these disciples, our Lord lifts you up and shows you a brief glimpse of his divine glory and power, pointing you toward your future glory. If you should become like our brother Peter, lost in the majesty and the spectacular, overlooking the race for the future reward, our Lord gives the gracious reminder to continue to look towards him and his holy cross. Truly, this Jesus is the only one to look to. Whether for encouragement or for discipline, for your cross to bear or for your future glory, he stands alone as your hope and trust. All this testifies that this man, with his shining bright face and radiant clothes, truly is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.