

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Transfiguration of Our Lord C
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Luke 9:28-36

'Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31 ESV)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“’Tis good, Lord, to be here.” Thus exclaimed Peter upon seeing the transfigured Christ in the presence of Moses and Elijah. The sight was too much to behold. Jesus shining in unimagined glory. The light emanating *from* Him, not reflecting off Him. The glory of His divinity shining through His humanity. Then there were Moses and Elijah, the great Law-giver and the great prophet, conversing with Jesus. It’s no wonder that Peter declared, “It is good for us to be here.” Indeed, it was!

Now it had been about a week since Peter had made his great confession that Jesus was the Christ of God. Following that, Jesus had told them of His impending passion, death, and resurrection. The disciples did not want to hear such things because they had misunderstood who Jesus really was and the purpose for which He had come. You see, they had in mind a theology of glory. They thought Jesus was going to set up an earthly kingdom. Jesus would teach them the theology of the cross. They had to learn that Christ's kingdom came about through suffering. Indeed, the glory of Christ is hidden in suffering.

So, Jesus led Peter, James, and John up the mountain to pray. This shouldn’t be surprising. Those three were witnesses to other events in Jesus’ life and ministry. And prayer was an important part of that life and would be for the disciples too. Yet, as Jesus was praying, they fell asleep, and it wouldn’t be the last time that would happen. But this time, as Jesus was praying His whole appearance changed. Matthew and Mark describe the event as a metamorphosis. He looked radiant. His clothes shone as bright as a flash of lightning.

At the same time, He was joined by Moses and Elijah appearing in glory. These two, representing the Law and the Prophets, had a significant history. Moses had been chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He met with God face-to-face on Sinai when he received the tablets of the Law. He had done miraculous works and was buried by God when he died. Elijah had been the great prophet who likewise preached God’s Word to Israel. He too had seen God, but only His back. He hadn’t died, but was taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

And here they were talking with Jesus. And what did they discuss? Jesus' exodus, His departure, which would soon take place in Jerusalem. Thus, it showed that the whole Old Testament pointed to Jesus and would find its fulfillment in the deliverance He would bring through His suffering and death. He would deliver all people from bondage to sin, death, and the devil. He would lead His people to the promised land of eternal life through His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

The disciples saw this as they started to wake up. They saw Moses and Elijah in their heavenly glory talking with Jesus in His glory. And Peter, overwhelmed at the sight, wanted to build three tents, or tabernacles, for these three great prophets. He wanted to preserve this glorious sight. And who could blame him? He certainly didn't want Jesus to suffer and die as He had said. What Peter didn't realize was that Moses and Elijah (and Jesus) already had a greater shelter than man could ever hope to build. For they dwelt in the glorious presence of Almighty God; and Peter, James, and John were seeing a reflection of that glory. It was good for them to be there.

And as Peter was talking, they were enveloped in a cloud and the voice of God spoke to them. And what He said had a familiar ring to it. The Epiphany season began with the account of Jesus' baptism when He was assured of His divine sonship as the Father told Him, "You are my Son whom I love." Today we hear the Father respond to Peter's confession that Jesus was the "Christ of God" by telling the disciples what that really meant. He said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him." Jesus wasn't just another prophet like Moses and Elijah. Rather, Jesus was God's own Son. The Father had chosen Him to deliver us from sin and death. And since Jesus had been chosen by God, indeed, was God, the disciples were to listen to Him. That meant they should pay attention to and believe what He said and obey Him no matter how difficult that would be. There was no one else to look for. Jesus was it! Jesus truly was the promised savior of the world.

And contrary to the disciples' desires, this Savior had to die. That was God's plan for our salvation. It was no mistake that His own Son was to die on the cross. That's what Moses and Elijah were talking about. It was God's plan that we find Christ's glory at the cross. For Jesus suffered damnation so that we could have salvation. Jesus was forsaken by His Father so that we would never have to experience that ourselves. Jesus died that we might live.

So, if we want to see Jesus' glory, we need to look at the cross. As Jesus hung there dying for our sins, we see how God loved us. He loved us in such a way that He sent His Son to die for us. And as we see Jesus on the cross, we remember what He has done for us. He has taken upon Himself the weight of all our sins and suffered the punishment in our stead. What could be more glorious? Yet He didn't remain in the grave. He rose again and ascended back into heaven where He sits enthroned at His Father's right hand ruling over all creation.

And as the disciples received strength from seeing Jesus in His glory, so do we. Each week, as we gather together in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we behold

the glory of God. In His Word read and proclaimed we hear Jesus speaking to us. In the Lord's Supper we see Christ's very body and blood which was given and shed for us. And as we eat and drink that heavenly meal, we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation. We receive the power and strength we need to go down from the mountain and into the valley of our everyday world to face whatever comes our way, whether the loss of a loved one, unemployment, illness, injury, or other misfortune. He is even with us when we don't look for Him and don't necessarily feel we need Him. And we receive power to live as His children, to demonstrate with our lips and our lives that we are His. We receive patience to endure suffering for His sake. As we remember His glory, we tell others about it so that they too may see it.

Indeed, it is good for us to be here. For we see in Christ's transfiguration our own. For we too will be transfigured and His glory will be ours as well when we dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now, strengthened by the glory of God in Christ, we go down from the mountain with our lives changed forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener