

Transfiguration Sunday
February 11, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Mark 9:2-9

A Glimpse of His True Glory

Mark 9:2-9 (EHV)

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain where they were alone by themselves. There he was transfigured in front of them. ³His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them. ⁴And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶He did not know what to say because they were terrified. ⁷A cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.” ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus alone. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Dear Friends in Christ,

We began the Epiphany season journey at the Jordan River. Jesus was baptized, stepping into the place of sinners to accomplish everything necessary to save us. We traveled along with Jesus to the Sea of Galilee where he called four men to follow him. Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their boats and nets to become fishers of men. We’ve heard Jesus’ powerful teaching, his call to repent and believe the gospel. We’ve seen his power over sickness and over the evil spirits. Epiphany has been a glorious journey that reveals who Jesus is – the Son of God and Son of Man, our Savior. Before we enter into the more solemn season of Lent it is fitting that we end the season of Epiphany with a mountaintop experience. Jesus literally goes up a mountain and reveals his glory to three disciples on this day we now call Transfiguration.

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Of the four fishermen first called to be disciples, three of them have been chosen by Jesus to be his inner circle. Andrew is still among the twelve, but Jesus invites Peter, James, and John to witness some amazing miracles. These three were in the room when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus back to life. These three were with Jesus in Gethsemane while he prayed before his arrest. And Jesus brought them up the mountain to see his glory on this day too.

These men already believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus had taught them with his words and shown them with his miracles. Even when they were called from their fishing boats, they knew Jesus was more than just another human prophet. Remember that Peter begged Jesus to go away from him because he was a sinful man. By this time, it was becoming clear to them who Jesus was and Peter had confessed just a week before Transfiguration that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now Jesus shows them the glory he truly has from before time began.

There he was transfigured in front of them. ³His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them.

The glory of the Lord had been seen before. At the time of Moses, the Lord’s glory appeared in the pillar of smoke and fire that led the people in the wilderness. The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle when completed. The same glory of the Lord filled the temple built by Solomon. The glory of the Lord shone around the angels who announced Christ’s birth. Now the glory of God was shining out from Jesus. Not around him or near him but from him. He is the source of this

pure, radiant light. He is the same God who appeared in the tabernacle, the temple and now walked the earth. Peter, James, and John are terrified but instead of asking Jesus to go away from them, they want to stay near Jesus in all his glory.

⁴And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶He did not know what to say because they were terrified.

Peter wants to stay on the mountain with Jesus. Peter will even build some kind of shelter so Jesus can stay a long time on the mountain in his glory. On the one hand, this makes no sense. Jesus, in all of his glory as the only begotten Son of God does not need a shelter built by human hands.

On the other hand, we can understand what Peter is trying to accomplish. The clothing and face of Christ are radiant with the glory of God. What enemy is going to come near that mountain? Legions of Roman soldiers could surround the mountain and Peter would feel safe with Jesus looking like he does now. No human army can challenge the power and glory of God's Son. Let's stay on the mountain. In addition, Peter would not have to worry about sickness or pain or suffering or anything unpleasant there. The glory of God in Christ is surely enough to drive away any such problems. Let's stay on the mountain. No evil spirit, not even Satan himself, would dare challenge Jesus when he is displaying his true glory as the one, true, eternal God. Let's stay on the mountain.

Heaven has come to a small part of the earth. On that mountain, the King of heaven was reigning. On that mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared. On that mountain, everything was good, and no evil could harm them. Who wouldn't want to stay there for a long time?

Jesus had told his disciples just the week before what was about to happen. He would go down the mountain, go into Jerusalem, be arrested and condemned to death and then rise on the third day. We know that all of these things happened just as Jesus said. Christ paid for sin, conquered death, defeated the devil and sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. So, where's the glory for us? Why does our life still have some not-so-glorious days? We follow the One who was radiant with pure light on the mountain of Transfiguration. Why does trouble still pursue us? Why doesn't sickness flee from our family? Why do enemies still threaten? Why don't the temptations of the devil stay far from us? Why can't we stay on the mountain with our Lord in all of his glory?

One day, we will be with Jesus in all of his glory on the mountain of the Lord. In heaven, we will bask in the light that comes not from the sun or the moon, but from our God himself. In heaven, we will have no fear of sickness, enemies or evil spirits. And Jesus is preparing a place for you to dwell with him at this very moment. You will never have to leave the mountain of the Lord.

But Jesus had to leave the Mount of Transfiguration. He had shown a glimpse of his glory and now it was time to humble himself to death, even death on the cross. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about his upcoming suffering and death. His glory as true God would again be hidden behind his humanity so that he could accomplish the salvation of sinners.

Since Jesus did not make full use of his power and glory as the true God at all times, it should not surprise us that his followers will not always be outwardly glorious. Therefore, we must not measure our worth to God by the outward conditions of our life. The state of my finances does not correlate to God's love for me. My health does not tell me how much God loves me. My successes or failures in my job, school, friendships and family life do not indicate what God thinks of me. The success I've had in fending off the devil's temptations or the number of times I've fallen are not what proves God's love for me. We have not entered into eternal glory yet. Expect some ups and downs, some glimpses of glory and lots of enduring trials. And in all of

these things, following the loving command given by the Father to Peter, James, and John.

⁷A cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him."

Listen to Jesus and you will know what God thinks of you.

Jesus said, "God so loved the world..."

Jesus said, "Repent and believe the good news."

Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus said, "Don't be afraid, just believe."

Jesus said, "All things are possible with God."

Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Jesus said, "I am with you always."

In the times when it seems to be difficult to see the glory of Jesus, listen to Jesus. Trust the Word of the One who came down the mount of glory, suffered and died at Golgotha, and rose to life on the third day. Listen to the One who is loved by his Father in heaven, the One who loved you to the end. Believe what he says even if outward signs contradict it. Trust what he says even if your heart and mind say something else. Jesus is God. He showed it on this day. He knows what he is talking about and will never tell you a lie. Listen to him until we see him face to glorious face in eternity.

Amen.