

## Sermon for February 14, 2024 - Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-9 (EHV)

### 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.

*<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Peter 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." <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say because they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> A cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him." <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus alone. <sup>9</sup> As 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.*

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God and your Saviour? "What a silly question," you might be thinking, "of course I believe that. Why else would I be here, in Church?" I ask because, even though we may verbally profess faith in Jesus, I don't believe we always understand the full implication of our confession. Let me explain what I mean:

Six days before our sermon text, Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was. Answering for all, Peter said: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"<sup>i</sup> After Jesus called Peter blessed for being able to make such a confession, He tried to explain to His disciples how He would suffer, die, and rise again to accomplish their salvation. Peter, however, did not want to hear Jesus talk about his humiliation – even going so far as to rebuke Jesus for saying such things. By doing that, Peter showed he did not fully grasp what his confession meant.

Like Peter, we willingly confess Jesus as the Son of God and our Saviour, but we often don't think about what that truth means for us. I mean, if we always took our confession to heart, we would never worry or get upset about anything because we would trust that Jesus would keep his promise to work in all things for our everlasting good. But we don't do that, do we? Like Peter, we need our faith strengthened, and that is precisely what the Holy Spirit wants to do for us today as we meditate on Mark's account of Jesus' 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.

Even though Jesus was happy that Peter confessed Him as the Christ, He was troubled that the disciples didn't understand what that meant. They thought Jesus came to establish an everlasting, earthly kingdom. Because they imagined earthly glory for him, they closed their minds to his talk about suffering and dying on the cross.

Jesus needed his disciples to understand precisely what Peter's confession meant. Why? Because He foresaw the persecution the disciples would face after his ascension. They could despair and fall from faith if they continued to misunderstand his nature and work. Perhaps that is why he allowed three of his disciples (who would become leaders in the early church) to experience his glory. Having witnessed it, they could encourage the rest of the disciples when faced with persecution.

And so: <sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them.* <sup>4</sup> *And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.*

Like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, Jesus underwent an incredible transformation. Glorious light emanated from every cell in his body, showing a purity that only the LORD himself could possess. Jesus radiated such divine beauty that *Peter 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."* <sup>6</sup> *He did not know what to say because they were terrified.*

Even though the sight of Jesus was terrifying (in the sense that they now realized that they were in the presence of God the Son), it was also terrifyingly beautiful. Yes, it was good to be with Jesus, and they wished the moment would last forever! And don't our souls long for the same thing: to be with Jesus forever, experiencing his divine loveliness, peace, and splendour? I think Saint Augustine said it best when he confessed to the LORD: "You have made us for yourself, and the heart never rests until it finds it rest in You."

But this experience was temporary because the LORD still had important work for them to do. He gave them a glimpse of Jesus' divine glory so that they could strengthen others during the trying days that lay ahead.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: we need to meditate on Jesus' glory through Peter's eyes. Why? So that we also may be convinced that Jesus is the almighty Son of God – trusting in his power to see us through every difficult time in life as we await His glorious reappearance. Jesus predicted we Christians will face very troubling times. <sup>ii</sup> Many people are falling away from Jesus – allowing their love for him to grow cold and be replaced by selfishness. People are rebelling against the will of their Creator - championing a "you be you" and "just do you" attitude instead of submitting themselves to the LORD who made and saved them for a noble purpose. The devil is using the world to tempt you to join it, promising all sorts of freedom and emotional relief if you accept its philosophy to do what feels right and follow your heart instead of God's Word. Because of that, we might ask: "Where is Jesus and the Kingdom he promises when the devil seems to be winning?" This is where the account of Jesus' transfiguration comes in: Three eyewitnesses saw His divine glory revealed and experienced a foretaste of heaven on earth. Yes, Jesus is the almighty Son of

God, and everything he promises is real. We have every reason to continue trusting in him to rescue us from every evil work and bring us safely into his heavenly kingdom as we believe and confess His Gospel to the world.<sup>iii</sup>

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

Another essential aspect of Jesus' transfiguration was the appearance of Moses and Elijah, two famous prophets through whom the LORD performed mighty miracles. They represented the Old Testament Scriptures. The Gospel of Luke tells us that these men spoke with Jesus *about his departure, which he was going to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem.*<sup>iv</sup>

Do you remember the problem Peter had six days earlier? He did not want to hear Jesus talk about his impending suffering and death. Why? Because it went against all the earthly glory he wanted for Jesus.

It was a blessing for Peter to hear Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus about His departure. Their conversation illustrates that the purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures was to prepare God's people for the sacrifice that the Christ would make to save them from their sins. By suffering the punishment we all have earned, Jesus would reconcile the world to God.<sup>v</sup>

Yes, Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection for our salvation is the focal point of all Scripture! It is Christ's greatest glory and the whole reason He took on human flesh and blood. God wants us to focus our attention on this, but do we? I do not think we can honestly say we always do. We 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 wish for something similar: a Christ who can help us make practical decisions and protect us from every temptation, problem, or sorrow so our earthly life can be filled with happiness and health?

While the LORD is concerned about our physical well-being, he did not send his only begotten Son to the cross so that we can feel good in our earthly life. No, he sent Jesus to be our Saviour from sin: to secure our everlasting future with Him in heaven – that is what he is most concerned about.

Jesus' revealing of his divine glory through Moses' and Elijah's testimony reminds us that the Bible is not some "self-help" book - showing us the way to worldly success. No, it is God's Word – written to lead us to Jesus. Like an x-ray machine, God gave his law to show our broken relationship with God and our need for salvation. Moreover, God gave us his gospel to reveal Jesus as our Saviour and tell us everything He did to restore our broken relationship with Him. The LORD loves us – desiring that we share in His everlasting glory. That is why the Bible consistently points us to His Son. That is why God wants us to listen to Him.

Part Three: Jesus' divine glory is revealed by the declaration of His Father.

We read: <sup>7</sup> *A cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him."* <sup>8</sup> *Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus alone.*

Peter's main problem accepting Jesus' talk about his crucifixion stemmed from not actually listening to Jesus when he spoke. If Peter had just set aside his own opinions about what Jesus was supposed to do, he would have heard Jesus speak about His resurrection and taken it to heart. He could have asked Jesus the right questions about his work and the salvation it would bring. By listening to Jesus, he could have grown in faith and understanding. But Peter was impetuous. His false ideas had closed his mind to the beauty Jesus was trying to reveal to him about his good confession.

Perhaps that is why God the Father appeared in the cloud – testifying that Jesus was indeed his Son whom He loves. *Listen to Him!*

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

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is easy to be like Peter: allowing our preconceived notions about Jesus and his work to prevent us from listening to His Word. This is why we must take to heart what God the Father said on the Mount of Transfiguration: *"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

In other words, do not assume you know everything you need about Jesus. Do not think you do not need to study the Scriptures on your own or come to Bible class because you learned it all as a kid in Sunday School. What God the Father told Peter, James, and John, he also tells us: Listen to Him! Prayerfully meditate on God's Word – asking the Holy Spirit to prevent worldly, preconceived notions from hearing what Jesus says. Then you will soon see what kind of Christ your Jesus is. He did not come to secure earthly happiness for you but an everlasting future by reconciling you to God. He calls you to repent and turn to Him for forgiveness. And, as you cling to Jesus in faith, He promises to watch over every aspect of your life - working in all things for your everlasting good.

Therefore, take comfort in the account of Jesus' Transfiguration and revelation of his divine glory. May it lead you to continually take to heart who Jesus is: your divine Saviour who not only went to the cross in payment for your sins but rose again and sits at the right hand of God. Keep that in mind when the devil does his best to tempt you to follow the ways of the world and be silent about Christ. Jesus is your divine Saviour. He will keep his promises to watch over and deliver you from the devil's temptations in this wicked world. He will be with you as you confess His Gospel to others so they too can believe and stand with you on the last day – transfigured by God to appear as gloriously as Jesus to live with him forever in paradise. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 16:16 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Matthew 24

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 5:18

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iv Luke 9:31 EHV

v Cf. 1 Peter 1:10-11