

**“It is Good to Be Here” + Luke 9:28-36**

**The Transfiguration of Our Lord + February 27, 2022**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**Have you ever been involved in one of those frustrating conflicts where it is one person’s word against another’s? This guy says this happened, but the other guy says something totally different happened? Disputes in a relationship are similarly frustrating when it boils down to “He says... / she says.” How can you discover the truth when there are conflicting reports?**

**Thankfully, there is no such problem when it comes to the events of our Lord’s Transfiguration. Jesus took three witnesses with Him so that the events there would be certain to all. “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke each independently report on the events there, and Peter describes the event in his second epistle (2 Peter 1:16-18). The Lord had it recorded that way so that the event could be of benefit to us, as well. What are the benefits for us?**

**--- I ---**

**First of all, Jesus is confirmed for us as God’s Chosen One. This happens in several ways. For one thing, notice the choice of the two men of old who come and bear witness to Jesus. It is Moses and Elijah. Moses received the Law of God on Mount Sinai and brought God’s word down to the people. God spoke to Him directly, as we heard in the Old Testament reading. He it is who wrote down the first five Books of the Bible, which provided the foundation for the nation of Israel. In it we read of the gracious activity of God, whereby He chose a man named Abraham, a man from a family of idol-worshipers, and decided to build a nation from him, to give his descendants a land of their own and by his Descendant to bring blessings to all nations. Moses prophesied about the coming Savior when He said, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command him” (Deuteronomy 18:18). Moses’ presence on the mount and conversation with Jesus show that Jesus is that prophet that Moses predicted. For devout Jews like Peter, James, and John, there was no one more authoritative as a representative of God than Moses. This would have made a deep impression on them, confirming Jesus as the**

**long-awaited One sent by God to save His people. The event is recorded for us so that we would also believe in Jesus as the only Savior of the world.**

**Elijah was used by God to bring about a powerful reformation at a time when the vast majority of Israelites had turned to the worship of idols. Remember the great demonstration the Lord commanded Elijah to carry out on Mt. Carmel. All day long the prophets of Baal pleaded with their god to listen to them and send fire on the bull they had prepared on their altar. They cried out to Baal and danced for Him and even cut themselves until the blood flowed. But there was no voice; no one answered; no one paid attention. How could anyone answer? There is no God but the Lord! Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice and had it doused thoroughly with water three times. With a simple prayer to the Lord, the Lord sent fire from heaven with burned up the bull, the wood, the stones, and the water in the trench—nothing was left except a hole in the ground. Elijah’s presence on the mountain here in glory with Jesus and Moses shows that Jesus is the One whom that One and Only God has sent. There is no one else to whom we should turn besides this Jesus.**

**The same Lord who sent fire from heaven in the days of Elijah is the Lord who speaks from heaven and confirms Jesus for us: “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” (v.35).**

**The Law and the Prophets were the two categories of the Old Testament, and here on the mountain they are both represented and both give approval to Jesus and His work. The Old Testament Scriptures testify of Jesus, and His fulfilling of numerous prophecies confirms that He is the One and Only Savior of the world.**

**Peter writes about this confirmation in his second letter: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts”**

**(2 Peter 1:16-20). Did you catch that? The written word is even more certain than the experience on the mountain. But both agree that Jesus is the one to whom to pay attention.**

**Friends, I cannot tell you how important this is for us to hear and believe today: that Jesus is the One, the Only One, by whom we can have life with God. There are many people today outside of the Christian church and even many working from within the church who want us to believe that there is another way to worship God, besides in the name of Jesus. They will tell you there are many roads to the same goal, that the many religions of the world, including the religion of the Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists, none of whom acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior, are all equally valid ways for man to get to God in heaven. This is a lie, dear friends! Do not believe it! The only way for us to get to heaven with God is through His Son, Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven to bring us life through His own life for us, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the grave. Listen to the voice from the mountain. Believe the witness of Moses and Elijah. Look to Jesus, and to Jesus alone. Believe the Old Testament Scriptures that promise His coming. Trust in the testimony of the apostles in the New Testament. Listen to Him!**

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**Secondly, on the mountain we learn what Jesus would accomplish for us in Jerusalem. The Transfiguration marks a pivotal point of time in the Gospel record. Jesus wraps up His preaching tour and heads toward Jerusalem. Later in the chapter we read: “When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). Moses and Elijah directed His attention to this in their discussion with Him.**

**There in Jerusalem Jesus would be on another mount, this time the place of the skull. There Jesus would also pray, but this prayer would include a petition for the very people who were murdering Him: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).**

**Here the appearance of Jesus’ face was altered, so that He for a short time displayed a glimpse of the glory He has as the Son of God, One with the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity. On that other mountain His face would**

display bitter anguish and pain, pierced by a crown of thorns, spat upon, full of bloody sweat and tears.

Instead of His garments shining dazzling white, “with unborrowed light” (LSB 414 st.1), He would be stripped of His garments, left to hang for all the world to see in total shame and disgrace. They would literally strip the clothes off His back and the last threads of His earthly property would be given to the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross.

Here Jesus is conversing with great men of old, Moses and Elijah, who were there to discuss with Him His upcoming work that He would fulfill in Jerusalem. There He would be left utterly alone. The leaders of His people would turn on Him, the very one they should have welcomed and worshiped. The Roman governor, who should have protected the innocent, would issue the death sentence against Him. His disciples would betray Him, deny Him, and run away in fear. His enemies would taunt Him about why God was not present to save Him.

Here the bright cloud of glory envelopes Jesus and those with Him. It is the bright cloud wherein the Lord Himself is present, the same way that God was present with His ancient people by means of the pillar of cloud by day and fiery pillar by night. On that other mountain, darkness would cover the earth, the darkness of God’s judgment against sin, the sins of the whole world which Christ bore in His own body.

Here the voice from the Father gives public and bold approval to His Son and all that He is doing: “This is my Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (v.35). On that other mount, the heaven’s would be silent. There would be no approving voice, no public acknowledgment from heaven, no word that onlookers should listen to Him. Instead Jesus would cry out in His hellish torment, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

What would all this accomplish? We find out when it tells us the topic of the discussion between Jesus and Moses and Elijah. It says they “spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (v. 31). The Gospel writer literally says they spoke of His “exodus” which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. We know that Moses accomplished a great exodus for God’s people. It is recorded in the Book of Exodus. Moses was used by

**God to perform many signs and wonders and to boldly go to Pharaoh and say, “Thus says the God of Israel: ‘Let My people go.’” Moses led them out of their bondage through the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai where God formally established them as His people. They went from being slaves to being citizens of the Kingdom of God.**

**Jesus, by His suffering on the cross—the nakedness, the wounds, the darkness, the hellish abandonment of His own Father—paid the full price to set us free from the slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil. By His resurrection from the dead we can be sure that we are free and that we have life that will never end.**

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**Thirdly, Jesus shows us our future with Him. “They saw His glory” (v.32). This is what the Lord has prepared for us. In the Book of Revelation it says that in eternity we will see His face. We will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. Now we know in part, but then we shall know fully, even as we have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).**

**They also saw Moses and Elijah in glory. Won’t it be great to be able to see and know and carry on a conversation with your heroes of faith? Won’t it be wonderful to be reunited with all those faithful believers in your acquaintance who have already gone home to heaven? When Jesus returns, “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with [the dead who have been raised] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).**

**May these blessings from the Mount of Transfiguration stay with us always! Jesus is confirmed as the Savior of the world. Jesus went to Jerusalem to accomplish our salvation. Jesus has prepared a home for us in glory. Amen.**

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