

Grace and Mercy to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. **This is God’s Word for our meditation.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Some of you know that Dawn and I used to live out West. We lived in Idaho, Oregon, and New Mexico. We always look for something positive in every place we have lived but I have to admit that one thing we miss from living out West are the mountains. It was great to drive up into the mountains just for the spectacular view you could get of the surrounding area. Sometimes, if it was clear, you could see for 30 or 40 miles.

The portion of scripture we have before us also talks about a mountain and a spectacular view the disciples had on top of that mountain. That spectacular view was, **“The Transfiguration.”** Today we want to take a closer look at that view on the mountain and take a look at this Transfiguration, **“From the Viewpoint of Jesus,”** and then **“From the Viewpoint of the Disciples.”**

I. Jesus took these three disciples up onto the mountain because he was trying to prepare himself and to prepare them for the future – Jesus knew what was coming in the very near future and then how the disciples would become the leaders of the early Christian Church.

The disciples had been following Jesus for over a year and had learned a lot from him, but they still didn’t know the details of how he would save them. The Transfiguration of Jesus took place about 6 or 8 months before Jesus suffered and died on the cross. About a week before the Transfiguration Jesus asked the disciples, **“Who do the crowds say that I am?”** and they answered, **“Some say John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”** Then he asked the disciples, **“Who do you say that I am?”** and Peter answered by saying, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

Even though the people didn’t know who Jesus was, the disciples understood that He was God’s Son and that was a key point that they needed to understand, as Jesus continued to prepare them for what was to come. As part of that preparation, Jesus told them that He must suffer many

things. That in addition to suffering, he would also be rejected by the elders and chief priests, and that he would die and on the third day he would be raised to life. (Mark 8:31). The disciples didn't want hear this and really didn't understand it. This was news they just couldn't comprehend. They had hoped that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom and now he was talking about suffering and death. It seems that they had missed the part where he said he would rise from the dead three days later and so Jesus continued to teach them – he continued to prepare them.

Jesus was not only preparing his disciples but he was also preparing himself for what was coming. The Transfiguration was part of that preparation for Jesus. Just as an Olympic athlete trains and prepares for the biggest event of their life, so Jesus was preparing for the biggest event of His life – His suffering, death, and resurrection.

God the Father helped in this process by transforming him – by letting his heavenly glory shine through his human shell. What a rush this must have been for Jesus - what an exhilarating feeling - for a moment to feel and experience the same kind of glory that he hadn't fully experienced for thirty three years. For that one moment, Jesus permitted himself to allow his full union with God to flow through His body and appear to the world before him - to let his disciples fully see who He really was - without the clothing of humility. There is nothing that we can really compare it to. But Jesus knew that He would soon look and feel that way all the time - very soon.

As this happened, Moses and Elijah appeared on the scene. Luke 9 tells us that, They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31) Here were two men that were on Jesus' level - they understood what was about to happen. Just as Moses had led God's people out of the bondage of Egypt, Jesus was about to lead the world out of the bondage of sin through the cross. Jesus didn't have to explain everything to them - they knew what was going to happen. Instead of trying to talk him out of it, as Peter tried to do, they encouraged him to do exactly as he planned - go to Jerusalem to die.

After this conversation was over, Mark writes that a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: **“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”** God the Father was stating His love for His Son. These words would again encourage Jesus to continue down the current path. These words would assure Jesus on the cross that the Father wasn't deserting Him because of anything He did, but because of everything WE did.

As I explain the transfiguration from the viewpoint of Jesus, some of you may wonder why did the Son of God need encouragement. It wasn't because he had doubts but rather because he knew what was ahead and he knew that the road was not going to be easy. This moment strengthened his determination even more to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This moment was not only an important moment for Jesus, it was also an important moment for his disciples and for us.

II. Their perspective was a little bit different. Their purpose in being there was to observe and to soak this moment up like a sponge and retain it. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the disciples were sleepy (Luke 9:32) and so the Transfiguration may have happened at night. If that was so,

the disciples woke up to an amazing sight – the divine glory of Jesus visible in his clothing and in his face. The Gospels describe his clothes as being whiter than white – as bright as a flash of lightening. And his face shone like the sun and standing there with Jesus were Elijah and Moses. Two great men of God from the Old Testament.

Jesus didn't have to introduce these two men to the disciples – they just knew who they were in the same way as we will know everyone in heaven. This was a sight that was probably amazing as well as frightening to the disciples. Peter couldn't keep quiet. He said, **“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”** Peter wanted to preserve this moment. Even though it was frightening, who wouldn't want to be in the presence of the glory of God and Moses and Elijah? But it got even better.

A cloud appeared. This was something the disciples were probably familiar with from their knowledge of the Old Testament because the glory of the LORD appeared as a cloud at critical times in Israel's history, such as at the crossing of the Red Sea and the dedication of the Tabernacle in the desert. This appearance would tell the Israelites - “I the Lord am with you! I will protect you!” Now the Lord was here - speaking His approval - saying to the disciples - “I am with Jesus!”. When the Father said, **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”** - this meant that Jesus' ministry - His job of living a perfect life in our place - was acceptable in God's sight. These words would assure the disciples that Jesus wasn't going to the cross because of what He failed to do. He was going to the cross for someone else's sins - the world's sins; our sins. With this testimony they would know that they had the right Savior and the right religion. What a wonderful vision this was! It prepared their eyes and their ears for the blood that they would see shed and the abuse that they would hear spoken to their Savior.

Then it was over. Jesus once again looked normal. Elijah and Moses were gone and there was no reason to stay on the mountain so they started to move on – to come down from the mountain. Jesus told them not to tell anyone about what they had seen until after he had risen from the dead. Even though the disciples saw this amazing sight they did not understand what was going on but as events unfolded months later, this would help them through those tough times. Later on in their ministries they would talk about what they had seen this day. John would write in his gospel, **“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father.”** (John 1:14) Peter would write in one of his epistles, **“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty ... We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”** (2 Peter 1:16,18). Only after Jesus had completed his work on this earth would the disciples understand what this day was all about.

We know that Jesus has completed his work of salvation. Everything he told the disciples – how he would suffer, and be rejected, and be put to death and rise three days later has happened. This picture of the Transfiguration of our Lord is for us also. It is there to assure us that Jesus is true God and all he did was according to God's plan of salvation for us too.

This Wednesday we will begin the season of Lent. It is a season of the church year that people don't always look forward to because it is a somber part of the church year. We don't sing the Alleluias during Lent and I wear my black robe for the midweek services. This helps us

reflect on our sinful condition. This helps us reflect on the price Christ paid for our sins. This helps us to appreciate the truly amazing gift of love our God has given us by bringing us to faith. But on the weekends I wear white as I look ahead to the empty tomb that assures me my salvation is complete. I wear white to remember the transfiguration of my Lord that assures me Jesus is God's Son who came into this world to save me and to save you. I wear white to remind me of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation that is ours through God's gracious gift of faith.

During the next 50 days we will have special opportunities to worship and to hear God's Word. We will be able to hear about God's great love for us as Jesus made his final journey to Jerusalem and to the cross for us. May we gather around God's Word with thankful hearts to rejoice in the love of our Savior and may we be comforted by his great love for us. Amen.