

**February 6, 2005**  
**Transfiguration**

*"Come Up to Me on the Mountain"*

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**Exodus 24:12, 15-18**

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**T**he LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction."<sup>15</sup> When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it,<sup>16</sup> and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.<sup>17</sup> To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.<sup>18</sup> Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

When we were little children, we come home late one night after celebrating a birthday with one of our relatives. As usual we feel asleep in the car before we arrived home. The car stopped and my dad said, "Kids, wake up." The whole sky was shimmering and undulating with bright lights. It was so overwhelming that we began to cry. My father quietly said, "You don't have to be afraid. These are the Northern Lights. I have never seen a more spectacular display."

Imagine that you are Peter or James or John. At the end of a long day you have climbed a mountain with Jesus to spend time with him in prayer. As he prayed, your eyes became heavy with sleep. When you opened them you saw Jesus transfigured and changed before you, shining with the glory that he had with his Heavenly Father from all eternity. We know that Peter, James and John never forgot that moment with Jesus. Later Peter would write in his letter, "We were eye witnesses of his majesty."

What if you were given a special place that you could visit to experience the glory of God as Peter, James and John did? During tough times and down days, you would take a few hours to go to that special place in the mountains or along the beach where the Lord would come to you and let you see his glory in some outward manifestation. That would charge you up and keep you going, even in the most difficult times.

You have such a special place here in God's Word. Here is where God speaks to you and here is where the Lord lets you see his glory. This morning we want to listen to the words God spoke to Moses when he called him up to mountain Sinai: "Come up to me on the mountain." **Come up to me on the mountain.** What a powerful invitation that is for us to come to the Lord in his Word, listen to his Word and see his glory.

**1) Listen to God speak in his Word**

Moses was privileged to have God speak directly to him in his Word. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.'" "The Lord said to Moses." God spoke directly to Moses and he listened to the words the Lord spoke to him.

Have you ever wondered how God spoke to these people like Moses? Did they hear the voice of God speaking to them as they were sleeping? Did they hear the voice speaking as they sat under a tree in the middle of the day? Could other people hear the voice speaking? Or did only the person to whom God was speaking actually hear the voice of God?

God speaks to us in two ways. He speaks to us through the world he has made and also through his Word. Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hand." I am holding in my hand a picture that was recently given to me by an elderly man who just lost his wife. It is a picture of Lake Moran in the Canadian Rockies. When you see places such as this, God communicates and tells you what an awesome, powerful and majestic God he is. However, if you had a choice of being in such a place of just sitting in your room and having God talk directly to you, I am sure I know what your preference would be?

The book of Hebrews tells us that God has spoken to us, not directly but indirectly through Jesus and the prophets such as Moses. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." As we heard in our reading a few minutes ago, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This means that I can open the Bible, point to any verse, and say to myself, "When I read this verse, God himself is speaking to me."

The Lord told Moses, "I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commands I have written for their instruction." God actually gave Moses the 10 commandments on two physical tablets of stone. When you read the 10 commandments with words such as "You shall have no other gods, or you shall not bear false witness, or you shall not steal, or you shall not covet, you believe that God has spoken these words and they are meant for people of every age. The fore fathers of our country respected these commandments so highly they placed them into the courtrooms of our land to reflect objective truth regarding right and wrong that comes from God.

If I believe sincerely without compromise that God has spoken to us when he gave us the ten commandments, then I realize that I have problem in my life that needs an immediately solution. If you listen carefully to the commandments they begin to open you eyes to see how far short you have fallen from God's glory. The unchanging 10 commandments reflect the will of God, the perfect and holy will of God that must punish everything that does not measure up to his standard of perfect. The 10 commandments are rules that I have repeatedly broken. They point to the need for me to have something more in my life to rescue me from the wrath to come.

By come up to the mountain and listening to God's Word I am also able to understand his plan to save me from the punishment I deserve. God's whole purpose for speaking to Moses and the people of Israel was to use them to point to the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Prior to giving the 10 commandments the Lord told his people, "I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself." They were a treasured possession for the Lord because they had the laws that showed the need for help, and also the laws that had ceremonies pointing ahead to Christ the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

## **2) Look at God's glory**

If you listen to God's Word then you will see God's glory, just as Moses saw God's glory when he listened to the words to come up to the mountain. We are told, "When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai." Moses was in that cloud of glory for six days. We are told that the glory of the Lord that appeared on that mountain was like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Literally the Hebrew says "an eating fire." Have you ever seen a fire in California go up the side of mountain and consume everything in its path? The flames that leap up are like giant tongues lapping up the vegetation and leaving ashes behind. The glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire, but the fire did not consume Moses. What an experience that must have been, to be in that cloud of glory, with the Lord for six days and then be on the mountain with the Lord for another 40 days!

Moses experienced an even greater glory on the day that Jesus was transfigured and changed in front of the three disciples. We are told in our gospel reading for today that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. Another gospel account says that they were talking to Jesus about his departure. The glory that Moses saw on the mountain in the giving of the law was a far lesser glory than the glory he saw in Jesus and his future sacrifice that would pay for the sin of the world.

Paul uses this example of Moses to explain the greater glory that is ours in Christ in 2 Corinthians 3. "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading as it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?" When Moses came down from the mountain, he had to cover his face, as he delivered various portions of the laws that were to govern God's people. He actually had to speak with a veil over his face so the people would not see his face gradually lose this reflected light from the holy mountain where the law was given. In contrast to the law that cannot save us, we have the glory of Christ, the message of his suffering and death and resurrection that gives us hope. We reflect this glory to one another even as we worship together here this morning. As Paul writes, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into this likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

What if you could have a place up in the mountains where God would speak directly to you, and or even better have Jesus appear directly to you, as he appeared to the disciples on the night of his resurrection with the words, "Peace be to you." What if you could have a place where the Lord would give you a vision of heaven similar to what he gave the Apostle John in the Revelation? God has not chosen to communicate directly to us, but he has communicated to us in his Word. When we open the word, we see the glory that is ours in Christ. We see the righteousness that Christ has won for us which we can never obtain by keeping the law. As we listen to the Word and see the glory, we share this glory with each other. Our faces begin to radiate to each other the blessings that we share in Christ. When Peter, James and John saw the glory of Jesus on the mountain, Peter suggested that they put up three shelters, one for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus. They wanted that moment to last for a long time, and not go away.

"Come up to me on the mountain and stay here." The words that were spoken to Moses

take on special meaning for us who are gathered here together as his people around his Word and his Sacrament. Listen to these words from Hebrews 12, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." Notice it does not say, "You will come." It says, "You have come!" That's a past tense.

Come up to the mountain and stay here. No Northern lights. No glacial lake in the Canadian Rockies, no walk in the Redwood forests, or along the beach as the sun is setting will ever compare to the glory that you have in Christ, waiting for you each day in his Word.