

February 18, 2007
Transfiguration

"A Glimpse of Glory for Weary Eyes"

LUKE 9:28-36

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) ³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

It was the most brilliant display of God's glory in nature I have ever seen. We were children coming home from a birthday party in the family, sleeping in the back seat of the car. The car stopped on a lonely country road. My father said, "Wake up! Wake up! You have to wake up!" His hand reached around and shakes us. Our eyes opened slowly. The night sky was filled with shimmering lights so spectacular that we became afraid and we started to cry. Then my dad and mom said, "Don't be afraid. Look at the Northern Lights, how beautiful they are." The whole dark night was shimmering with different colored lights, a display so spectacular I can remember it as if it happened yesterday.

Take all the greatest display of God's glory you have ever seen, a sunset at the beach, a dark night shimmering with stars, an experience with the Northern Lights, the birth of your first child, a rainbow reaching across the sky or maybe even a full double rainbow similar to the one we saw in Santa Maria a few weeks again. Put them all together into one sheer second of beauty and it cannot measure up in any way, shape or form to the glory that Peter, James and John saw in Jesus that night when they went up to the mountain to pray with him. It was a sight they carried with them the rest of their lives as John tells us in his gospel account, "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Through God's holy Word we can relive this event that Peter, James and John had experienced. Through the miracle eyes of faith we can make it our own. As we just sang in the hymn, "Then hail the double glory, Of Jesus Christ, our Lord, And let the wondrous story, Full peace and joy accord." I can sense some weariness and tiredness on some of your eyes this morning. Life is not always what it was cracked up to be, as the old saying goes. We get weary and tired and we long to have our energy restored. What better way is there for doing this than going with Peter, James and John to catch a glimpse of Jesus shining in all of his glory.

Jesus needed to see this glory in himself

The amazing display of glory in the body of Jesus was not just meant to help the disciples. It was an encouragement for Jesus who is about to make the final trip to Jerusalem where he would be punished for the awfulness of our sin and even forsaken by his own heavenly Father so we could go free. "About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, James and John with him and went up onto a mountain to pray." It was eight days after Jesus provided the disciples with a graphic description of the suffering and death that was waiting for him. Have you ever had a big surgery scheduled and found yourself thinking about it all the time? Jesus had his mind on the future when the punishment for our peace would be placed on him. Even though he was Lord and God from all eternity, he was also true man born of the Virgin Mary. "He was tempted in all parts as we are, yet without sin." He exhausted himself during the day to help others. In the evening hours he prayed to his heavenly Father. It says in Hebrews 5:7, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears from the one that could save him from death." Don't you see Jesus as he spends most of his nights in prayer to his heavenly Father? You will never hear anyone pray with more intensity than Jesus when he talked to his heavenly Father.

As he was praying it says that his face changed. "The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning." Jesus' face changed. There was a glow and a beauty shining forth from the face of Jesus that powerfully proclaimed he is Lord and God. You can tell so much from looking at someone's face. You can tell if they are angry, or sad, or happy, or frightened, or tired or eager to do something. If you and I could have been there personally with Jesus we would have seen him radiate a glory that could only come from someone who is Lord and God. Jesus needed that reminder of the glory that he had with his Father from all eternity, a glory that would be waiting for him after his resurrection from the dead.

What was it like for Jesus to experience glory with his heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit as one God for all eternity? We get a glimpse of this glory as we listen to Jesus pray in John 17, but we cannot fully comprehend it. "O Father give me the glory I had with you before the world began." Take the best moments of your life when you really enjoyed being with people that you love and you knew they loved you. Bring them all together into one pure second of joy and love, and you will not come anywhere close to grasping even slightly the glory that Jesus enjoyed with his Father from all eternity. Here on this mountain Jesus receives a glimpse of that glory to sustain him in the difficult days that were coming.

The time for Jesus to see this glory was further enhanced by the appearance of two shining lights from the history of God's people. Moses and Elijah are called out of retirement to stand next to Jesus and talk to him more about his suffering, death and resurrection. "Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus." They appeared in glorious splendor, displaying some of the glory that will be ours when the Lord takes us home to be with him in the place he has prepared for us. They talked to Jesus about his departure and the great fulfillment of all the promises in the Old Testament that was about to take place in Jerusalem. The word for "departure" in the Greek language is the word, "exodus." Just as the Old Testament people had their exodus from Egypt that led to the Promised Land, Jesus had an exodus from this life that would lead to glory. When Christians die it is much more than just dying, or passing away, or leaving. It is an exodus,

a going home, a leaving of one place for another that is so much better. Just as angels ministered to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Moses and Elijah ministered to Jesus as they talked to him about his exodus and the glory that would follow when everything was fulfilled. The death of Jesus was not a defeat but a victory. He died crying out loudly, "Father in your hands I commit my spirit."

And there is even more glory for Jesus. We are told that a cloud enveloped them. Then a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." At the beginning of his ministry at his baptism Jesus heard similar words, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." Now the Father says, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

We might compare this to a basketball game. There are three seconds left in the game. The home team is down by one point. The coach calls time out. In the huddle near the bench, he talks to his players and tells them how the ball is going to go to their point guard, their best shooter and he will take the best shot. Then looking to his man he says, "I know you can do it." The way the coach speaks to him makes him want to be in the game, take the ball, and shoot the last basket.

The prophet Isaiah describes our heavenly Father choosing Jesus his Son with these remarkable words. "The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intercede, so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained." I cannot find justice in myself, I can only find failure to keep God's law as he requires. No one can provide the world with the justice that Jesus provides. No one can cry out from a cross and say, "It is finished." No one can rise from the dead and show us his hands and say "Peace be to you" no one except Jesus. Jesus was willing to take on the job the Father chose for him joyfully. The book of Hebrews says, "For that joy set before him he endured the cross and the shame." Jesus needed the glimpse of glory that night on that holy mountain as he prayed to his heavenly Father. It is a glimpse of glory that our weary eyes also need daily to survive the daily battles of life when we take our cross and follow him.

A glimpse of glory for us

As Jesus prayed into the night the eyes of the disciples eyes began to close and they fell asleep. Have you ever found yourself falling asleep as you were praying or reading your Bible? What better way to fall asleep at night? As they were sleeping they were suddenly fully awakened by the bright light that was shining on this holy mountain. "They saw his glory and the two men standing with him." They were wide-awake.

Peter wanted the moment to last a long time. "Master, let us put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." We are told that he did not know what he was saying. Here was the ultimate Kodak moment and he wanted it preserved. Peter never forgot that moment. He wrote about it in his letter, "But we were eye witness of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.'"

"Lord it is good to be here!" There are certain places in life or zones in life that are so

good we don't want them to end. Think of some of the best moments of your life. People were with you who really cared about you and loved you. You took pictures of those happy times. When you look back at the pictures you are reminded of how good it was to be there at that time and that place in your life. Stored in your memory bank are also the best times you have had with Jesus when you have seen his glory most clearly. The Holy Spirit loves to help you remember those moments because with Jesus the best moments are always still waiting for us. Goodness and mercy follow you all the days of the life when you knew the love the Shepherd has for you.

The Lord has given us a book, the Holy Bible, in which he comes to us and shows us his glory in Jesus our Savior. Listen again to these amazing words from our second lesson for today. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine in the darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." By opening the Bible and reading God's Word you are able to see the face of Christ shining in his glory as God and shining in his glory with his love for you. Finally the time will come for all of us when Jesus returns in glory and takes us to the place he has prepared for us. Then the prayer Jesus prayed for you will come true, "O Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory." Jesus wants you and me to lift our weary eyes and see his glory here in his Word and ultimately see his full glory when he comes to take us home to be with him. In a new heaven and new earth we will see him face to face. We won't even need the light of the sun. Oh, that we were there! Amen.