

Transfiguration Sunday
February 7, 2016

“Jesus Take Us to the Mountain”

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.

January 24, 1848. James Marshall is building a sawmill on the south fork of the American River. In the tailrace where the water flows after it comes off the waterwheel, he notices something sparkling in the water, sparkling like gold. He picks up some of the pieces and places them into his hat. He shows them to his boss John Sutter. They have the pieces of gold tested or assayed. They were of very high quality. Imagine for a moment if you were James Marshall or John Sutter holding pieces of gold in your hand. Think of the change that came into their lives because of that gold.

Peter, James and John discovered something on that mountain with Jesus that was far more valuable than all the gold in the world. They were privileged to see Jesus radiate his glory as God in a very special way. Later they would recall what they saw on that mountain. John wrote in his gospel account, “We have seen his glory.” And Peter wrote in one of his letters, “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

What amazes us though is how Peter, James and John seemed to lose sight of what they saw in Jesus that day. Not too long after this great event Peter finds himself cursing and swearing that he never knew Jesus. James and John are fighting with the other disciples on who was the greatest in the kingdom of God. There are those good days in life when we think of Jesus and his glory. They are the bad days when we lose sight of this glory as we get ourselves bogged down in our problems or even in our sinful behavior. So we offer this prayer as the theme for our sermon today. **“Jesus Take Us to the Mountain.”**

Help us see your glory

Peter, James and John saw something truly spectacular that they could carry with them the rest of their lives. “About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up on to a mountain to pray.” Eight days before going up the

mountain to pray with Jesus, they heard him describe what would happen to him when they went up to Jerusalem. "The Son of Man must suffer many things...He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Recently someone told me how hard it was to think about God the Father putting his own Son to death on the cross. Imagine how hard this was for the disciples to hear these words about Jesus suffering and being rejected and being killed.

Jesus took his three closest disciples with him to pray. With his suffering and death approaching fast, Jesus wanted time to be alone with his Father in prayer. There is an amazing verse in Hebrews five that says, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death." Later in the gospel of Luke we read that Jesus prayed so fervently to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane his sweat fell to the ground as great drops of blood.

Peter, James and John fell asleep while Jesus was praying. That should not surprise us considering how much time Jesus spent in prayer. The same thing happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. That night he pleaded with them to stay awake and watch because the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. While they are sleeping something truly amazing happens. "As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning." The account in Matthew says, "Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light." Jesus began radiating from his face and his clothes the glory that he had with his Father from all eternity.

Have you ever been close to a flash of lightning, real close? I have. When we were living in Tucson there was a powerful thunderstorm that came during the monsoon season in late summer. The lightning hit the chain link fence near the backyard where we lived. There was this crash, and hiss and loud boom. The backyard lit up with brilliant flash of lightning. Jesus face shone like the sun. His clothes were like a brilliant flash of lightning. The book of Hebrews tell us that Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory." In the Nicene Creed we confess our faith with the words, "God from God and Light from Light."

You have been to this mountain with Jesus. You have seen his glory through this amazing faith given to you by the Holy Spirit. You have seen Jesus change water into wine and you believe with all your heart he is doing this because he wants to show you and all the world that he is your Lord and God. With your eyes of faith you stare at the nail marks in the hands of Jesus after he raised himself from the dead. With Thomas you proclaim boldly and confidently, "My Lord and my God." And you know that someday you will see Jesus return on clouds of glory with the sound of the trumpet and the shout of an archangel. The night before he died Jesus prayed this prayer to his heavenly Father. "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

You could be sitting here this morning with your pockets full of gold, so full that you could hardly walk. The glory of that gold will not last just it did not last for James Marshall and John Sutter or the tens of thousands who came to California to strike it rich in 1849. The glory of man always fades. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall because the breath of the Lord blows on them." The hills are turning green, but it won't be long

before they turn brown. The glory of man fades away. If things are going really well for you right now, don't be surprised if suddenly they change. A man who recently lost his wife said, "I just don't know why this happened." The glory we see in Jesus this morning lasts forever. Jesus take us to the mountain. Show us your glory. Help us live in that glory and not lose sight of who you are.

Help us hear Moses and Elijah talking to you

This sight of Jesus in all his glory gets even better. "Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." When Moses died, the Lord buried him on Mount Nebo. Elijah didn't die. He went up to heaven in a whirlwind and on a chariot of fire. Now they are there with Jesus in glorious splendor. They talked with Jesus about his departure which was about to happen when he fulfilled everything that he had come to do for us.

Jesus wanted to go home with his Father. Remember the movie *ET*. There is this very emotional part in the movie where ET says, "ET go home." This Extra Terrestrial lovable creature wanted to go home to be with the people he loved. Jesus wanted to depart this life and go home to be with his Father in heaven. Moses and Elijah were talking to him about his departure, his ascending up to heaven. How much did Jesus long to be home with his heavenly Father? Again we turn to his amazing prayer in John 17, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you have gave me to do. And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

Jesus would not leave this earth and go home to his Father without first completing the work that had to be done. Moses and Elijah talked to him about first completing this work and then departing to be home with his Father. Jesus take us to the mountain. Let us hear this conversation you had with Moses and Elijah about going home to your Father after everything has been done perfectly.

Do you ever get annoyed by things that are not done right? Sure you do. The plumber tried to fix your leaky pipe but it is still leaking. The mechanic tried to fix the strange sound in your car's engine but it is still making a strange knocking sound. The doctor tries to fix the shattered bone in your body but it is never really the same. Do you ever get down, really down by things not done right. Now I am talking about the life you try to live for Christ. You get so disappointed and upset and down when you fail to honor the Lord as you should. Terrible thoughts come into your mind that would shame hell itself. You vow to treat others more kindly and you fail. I can find nothing in me that I can depend on to save myself from the wrath to come. My only hope is the perfect life Jesus and the perfect sacrifice he offered to Father for my sin. That was done perfectly and because that was done perfectly Jesus could depart and go back home to his heavenly Father in full glory.

Help us hear your heavenly Father

Jesus take us to the mountain. Help us hear your heavenly Father speaking to you. "While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. This is no ordinary cloud or fog bank rolling in from the ocean at night. This is a cloud of God's glory and it made the disciples afraid. But then a voice came from

the cloud that spoke words we want to remember every day of our life here on this earth. The Father said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." The account in Matthew says, "This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

This such good news to hear this morning. God our heavenly Father chose his Son to live the perfect life we could never live. The Father was pleased with the life Jesus lived because it was perfect. The Father chose to have his Son take our sin upon him and be punished in our place. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said, "It was God's will to crush him." When Jesus lived the perfect life we could not live and made the perfect sacrifice for every sin we committed, then the Father showed how pleased he was with the life Jesus lived and the death he died by raising him to life again.

I can have all the gold in the world and it cannot pay for one sin. I can be one of the nicest person in this community but that cannot pay for one sin. My only hope and your only hope is the perfect life Jesus lived that was pleasing to our heavenly Father. Jesus offers you that perfect life as a free gift. Through his life and death, your Father in heaven can say, "This is my son and this is my daughter whom I love." That makes you the richest person in the world. Jesus take us to the mountain. Amen.