

Theme: **From the Glory of the Transfiguration to the Glory of the Cross**

Text: Matthew 17:1 – 9

Season: Transfiguration Sunday

Date: February 26, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you let God transform your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It had just snowed the night before and I had walked to the top of Bald Mountain, just to the south and east of Mount Rosalie. As I sat on a rock looking around and I saw one of most glorious sight that I have ever seen. The sun was just beginning to rise over the clouds and as it did it revealed that the clouds had covered all the valleys with only the tops of the mountains showing now with the sun glistening off their new fallen snow. As I sat there looking at that glorious sight, I gave thanks to God for allowing me to see His Glory and I thought, "I wonder if this is what heaven is going to be like?"

Now some of us have gotten to see a glimpse of the Glory of God in our lives here on earth, but Peter, James and John, the Apostles of Jesus, they got to see the Glory of God in all its fullness on the top of the mount of Transfiguration. There Jesus was transformed before their eyes and **His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here, if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah."** (Mt. 17: 2 – 5)

What an incredible sight it must have been to see God in all His Glory and to hear Jesus, Moses and Elijah talking about Jesus moving on from this mountain top experience to an even more glorious mountain top experience by His death on the Cross of Calvary and then three day later His Resurrection. I'm pretty sure that most of us would have been right there with the Apostle Peter wanting to stay right there in that mountain top experience with Jesus, Moses and Elijah, but that was just a glimpse of the Glory of God that we will see when we get to heaven and live with God.

Sure it's nice when you are on a mountain top experience, seeing and enjoying the beauty and peacefulness of the day. You might even wish that the beauty and peace of the day would continue on and that you wouldn't have to come down from this mountain top experience, like the Apostle Peter felt, but then you are reminded of your responsibility here

on this earth and that incredible day just doesn't last. That's the way it is sometimes, isn't it? As Christians, we have opportunities and times when things just seem to be going so smoothly that we start thinking that they will never change and we start take credit for the good things happening to us and don't give credit to God for His blessings in our life. 'So why can't we pitch out tent right here and let the rest of the world move on without us?' we might ask ourselves. That's what the Apostle Peter, James and John were thinking about as they saw and heard the Transfigured of Jesus with Moses and Elijah stand there talking. But then that was what Peter wanted Jesus to do for all the disciple 6 days earlier when he had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah and Jesus had told them, **that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."** (Mt. 16:21 - 23)

Setting our minds on the things of man instead of the things of God, we all can plead guilty of that sin along with Peter and the rest of the disciples, but that was six days earlier and now the Apostle Peter, James and John were getting to see Jesus in all His Glory and wanted it to stay right there just like it is forever. Here it comes again that age old sin that we inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve, self-centeredness. It's when we think more about ourselves instead of others and think that this is the best it will ever be and forget that this is only a glimpse of what God is going to give us. Why that's what our world keep telling us to do, look after yourself first and then others second and then if you feel like it, remember your creator God, who gave it all to you. You're in control so take advantage of the situation and forget about who gave you this glimpse of glory and peace and love.

Well while the Apostle Peter was falling back into that trap of looking after himself first, the creator God who gave him that glimpse of heaven came down and said a few words of importance. The Evangelist Matthew tells us, **"While Peter was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."** ⁶ **When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified."** (Mt 17:5-6)

Listen to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, for He is not only tell us but He also showing us what He is going to give to us forever in our heavenly home, His glory and peace and love are ours because of His life given to us, because of His death that paid for all our debts and because of His resurrection that gave us a new life. But are we listening? Are we paying attention to all that God is doing for us? Or are we stuck in the self-centered cycle of sin and forgetting about all the blessings God wants to give to us through His love, grace and mercy.

Now I'm pretty certain that if God were to come down in the form of a cloud and cover this room and then start speaking to us that we all would fall down to the ground in terror. Terrorized because we often think that we need to make the payment for all the sins that we have committed. Terrorized because the almighty God is holy and we are sinful. Terrorized because with one little word we are dead forever. Those are the reasons why the Apostle Peter, James and John fell on their faces in terror on that day and that wouldn't be any different for us if it happen back then.

But there is a difference if it happened today because we don't need to fall on our faces in terror because Jesus didn't pitch His tent on the top of the mount of Transfiguration. No, instead He came down from the mount of Transfiguration and went to mount Zion and to the Cross of Calvary for you and me. That's right, if Jesus would have pitched His tent with Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration and lived out eternity in His heavenly glory we all wouldn't be living out our eternity without even a glimpse of God's glory ever. But Jesus wasn't concerned about Himself but instead He was concerned about each of us. Because of His great love for each and every one of us, that is Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John, you and me, He came down from His Glory on the mount of Transfiguration to go to Jerusalem where He gives us the Glory of God by taking our sins to the Cross of Calvary and dying for them and then rising again on the third day to open the doors to heaven for us.

Have no fear! The gates of Heaven are open to you and me because Jesus has given us His righteousness and taken all our sins away. That's what Jesus was headed to do for us even when we keep falling into the sin of self-centeredness. The Evangelist Matthew tells us, **'But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."** (Mt. 17:7-9)

“Rise and have no fear,” because Jesus has gone to Jerusalem and to the Cross of Calvary for us, where He suffered and died for all our sins and then rose from the grave three days later to give us His Glory, peace and love forever. God’s glory is now available for each of us through His Word and sacraments and in our heavenly home for all eternity. But we don’t have to keep it a secret because Jesus has risen from the dead and has prepared a place for us in His heavenly home.

The Apostles Peter, James and John’s lives were transformed as they listened to the words of Jesus and let the Holy Spirit go to work in their lives. Today your lives can be transformed also and made ready for the glory of God as you listen to God’s Word and let the Holy Spirit go to work in your lives. It is called sanctification and it happens in our lives as we listen to the words of God and let the Holy Spirit go to work in our lives so that we have faith in all that Jesus Christ has done for us and believe that Jesus has taken care of all our sins and loves us so much that He has prepared a perfect place for us to live with Him for all eternity. That’s the glory, peace and love that awaits us in our heavenly home.

What a glorious sight it is to see our heavenly home even if now it’s only a glimpse of what it will be? The Apostle Peter, James and John got a chance to see a glimpse of what the glory of heaven is going to be like, but there was work to be done, while they waited for God to take them home. We find ourselves in a similar situation. God has shown us a glimpse of the glory, peace and love that we will have in our heavenly home to help us remember what our goal needs to be in this world. Heaven is our home, not this sin filled world but we need to listen to God’s Word if we want to get there and we need to let Jesus guide us along the way as we share the joy of seeing and knowing about the glory of God given to us for all eternity with others. Amen.