

## Sermon Transcript for the Transfiguration of Our Lord, January 24, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now we have this transfiguration, this theophany is another way of showing it, the revelation of God to the people. A mountaintop experience. The mountaintop experience extraordinaire. We have Peter and James and John joining with Jesus up on the mountain. We have a reflection. It's obvious why the Exodus passage is chosen. We have God. When we speak of God, we speak of the Son of God, speaking with Moses on the mountain of Sinai. Then here we have Moses and Elijah coming to speak to Jesus, who is God on another mountain. It's as if there are two experiences, the Moses experience and the Jesus experience. Moses was the bringer of the Law, but here is Jesus, who is the bringer of the Gospel. It's completing the story. It's fulfilling what the Law demands, that no one could fulfill, is now coming to fruition in Jesus Christ.

So you see those bookends there of the Law and the Gospel with the two experiences on the mountain with Moses. You also have bookends in Jesus' own ministry, because when Jesus began his public ministry, it was with His baptism. And in His baptism, a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." Now, Jesus has spent the last three years teaching His disciples and leading them and training them and teaching them what He desires for them and, specifically, what He is going to do for humanity, i.e., die on the cross. In fact, this transfiguration message comes almost immediately following, well, actually, six days following this conversation between Jesus and his disciples, when He asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they say, "Moses, Elijah, the prophet." "Who knows? Somebody?" "John the Baptist." Then He turns to His disciples and He said, "Well, who do you say that I am?" And Peter, being the one who's always willing to speak first, says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In that confession, then Jesus declares this wonderful statement, the foundation of our faith, "Upon this, your confession, Peter, I will build my church." He says, "Upon this rock, I will build my church." But that rock is Peter's confession, that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And it is that upon which we stand firm, that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Son of God, who was with Moses in the giving of the Law and is now with us in human form. In both instances, we see the glory of God shining forth as if it can not be contained any longer. And now, back to Peter. He said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And then Jesus goes on to talk about how He will go into Jerusalem and He will be betrayed and He will suffer and He will die. And Peter says, "You can't do that, Lord. Let me convince you that that's not the right thing to do. You should avoid this." And Jesus comes back to Peter with, "Get behind me, Satan." All of that, that whole conversation, probably took place in an hour, maybe two hours at most, we have between "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God and upon this rock I will build my church," to "Get behind me, Satan." It's as if Peter didn't understand, which he did not, the fullness of the message of God. And he just had to say something. He just felt like he had to convince Jesus that there was a better way.

I mean, when we think about our own lives, how often do we think that our lives should have gone differently? That God shouldn't let us go through whatever trial or struggle that we're going through. And yet, is He not God? And has He not created us? And can He do with His creation, what He chooses to do? Now, that doesn't sound very pleasing in human ears, especially American ears, where we're used to taking care of ourselves and "God helps them that helps

themselves" kind of thing. But the reality is just because you believe in God doesn't mean everything's going to go smoothly. In fact, it may not go smoothly because you've now put a target on your back for Satan and his forces to try to deceive you, to try and weaken your faith, to try and distract you so that you do not stand firm or share the Gospel with those around you. So life may get more difficult with a confession of Christ.

But regardless of all of that, God is still the maker of the universe. And Jesus is still His beloved Son. He has still forgiven our sins and promised us everlasting life. Now, up on the mountain top, Jesus is there and it says that He was transfigured. It's like it just happened! Nobody caused it. It was just the glory of God. He's about ready to go into Jerusalem and His glory just shines forth as He's talking with Moses and Elijah. And it's just revealed that this is what's going on to Peter, James and John. Now, Peter may have heard. I mean, what were Moses and Elijah and Jesus talking about? Well, they were talking about His death and what was going to take place in the very near future. They're listening to Jesus and they're hearing Him and that fellowship is there and preparing for the journey into Jerusalem. And it might be that Peter was hearing what was being spoken and like he did six days earlier, he didn't like the conversation. So he interrupts them and says, "Lord, it's good for us to be here." Kind of like, well, let's not talk about your death. Let's focus on the here and the now. Let's focus on the mountaintop experience. That's what we really want. I'll build three tents. He didn't know what he was talking about. And God, the Father, interrupts him and says, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." And this time he adds, "Listen to Him," as if Peter was not listening at that time. So we have this bookend of the ministry, the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased", in His baptism. And then "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him," in His transfiguration.

Immediately following this is Holy Week. He goes into Jerusalem and Palm Sunday with all this praise and glory. Then a couple of days later, "Crucify, crucify Him." We have this completion. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Now my time has come." As we said in the miracle of the turning of water to wine, "My hour has not yet come." But here at the transfiguration it's as if Jesus and the situation and the circumstances are saying, "Now is the hour. My hour is at hand. It is coming quickly." And He did not shy away from it, but He went forward because He loves us so much that He was willing to die for us.

And we have Peter then, in Second Peter, saying, look, we saw this. This is not cleverly devised myths or something made up or some fantasy story that we thought was cool. No, we got this directly. We were there. We heard the voice from heaven. And we know that the message that He gave is true. Here's Peter finally, on the other side of the crucifixion and resurrection and restoration, realizing and being able to claim that God is the one who spoke all these things and that all of His prophecies about His death and His resurrection have come true. They are not from man, but they are from God. You can trust it.

The ultimate revelation and epiphany that Jesus Christ has got a voice from heaven. It doesn't get more clear than that. And the shining forth, just like Moses having received the reflection of God by just talking with Him, his face shown. Jesus, being God Himself, doesn't reflect, but radiates that glory so then Peter, James and John fall to their faces when they hear the voice and they see the majesty of Jesus Christ.

In this time of challenge, when we seem to be afraid of so many things, it's good to know that God is all powerful and almighty and that He still has our interests and our best interests in mind. He still loves us. This God of majesty, of might, of power, humbled Himself to connect with us, to bear with us, to bear our sins so that in His hour He could forgive us and redeem us from everything that comes our way. He is God's beloved Son. He is our Lord and Savior. Listen to Him, His Word. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. You will be transformed by the renewing of your minds through the Word and let that strength and that renewing be with you and bear with you through all the days of your life, from now on until death brings us to Christ again. Where we will see Him again, in His glory and not have to hide our eyes or put a veil over our face. But we will rejoice and be glad in Him each and every day for all eternity.

May His grace be with you. Amen.