

Sermon Transcript for the Transfiguration of our Lord

February 6, 2022

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

First off, we don't often talk about the Introit in the sermon, but I want to focus on a little section of this Introit before we get into anything else. At the very end or towards the end, it says for a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. And it says, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Now, we often think of that as David praising God and just thanking him for the opportunity to be with God and to serve him. But the thing of it is, is that David is not able to be a doorkeeper in the house of his God. He has to be in the tents of the wicked.

He has to live in the daily grind of daily life, of ruling the kingdom and dealing with all the pressures and everything else that is going on. In other words, David is saying, I really don't want to do what I have to do. I'd rather just be in your house and praise you all day long. It'd be so much easier, so much more joyful, and I wouldn't have to deal with the cares and concerns of this world. So David, even David we see has these struggles that life is a little bit painful and I'd rather not be doing this. I'd rather be in the house of the Lord.

We have Paul at one point saying, to live as Christ and to die is gain, I'd rather be with Christ, but for the sake of the Gospel and my job to serve, and my vocation to proclaim the word of God and be a missionary, I will remain. But his desire was to be with God. We as Christians should feel a little bit torn about living in this world, because if we understand the nature of the promise of God, we can understand that this is not our home. Admittedly, this is all we know, and it's very familiar to us, but this is not our home. Our home is with God. The place where we belong is in the presence of God all day long. That is what we look forward to and anticipate in the new age when Christ comes again, or when we face our death, we know that we are finally, finally going home and we won't have to deal with the cares and the concerns and the struggles of this world.

So we understand what Paul means when he says to live is Christ, but to die is gain. We can understand David saying, I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than have to deal today in these tents of wickedness that I have to dwell in.

Peter expresses something of the same sentiment, but he doesn't fully understand what he is saying. Like most of the things Peter says, half the time, he's brilliant and says exactly what is supposed to be said, and then the other half of the time, he's off in left field and completely wrong about what's going on. In this case, he's completely wrong about what is going on.

So Jesus is up on the mountain with Peter, James and John and this is called the transfiguration, but I've often heard it also described as a theophany. A theophany, theo being God and a theophany is like an appearance of God or an expression of God. You see the glory of God on the mountain top, you see Jesus. Like Moses, the glory of God is so much that his whole body shines. Now with Moses, it was just his face that he had to cover with a veil because he was in the presence of God. But here we have Moses and Elijah testifying and the voice from heaven testifying that Jesus is not only a prophet of God, does not only speak with God, but is indeed God himself. It's almost as if every once in a while, I don't know if I'm accurate in this, but it feels like every time a miracle takes place or like this transfiguration where we see the glory of God, it's as if God cannot quite be contained in his human form. He's just got to come out every once in a while, to reveal his glory so the people might see the power and majesty of God and seek after him.

Peter sees this, sees Moses and Elijah and sees Jesus just brilliantly transfigured before him. Peter says, "Well, Lord, let me make a tent for you and Elijah and Moses." Now what in the world is Peter trying to do? This event comes immediately after the discussion where Jesus asks Peter or asks the disciples, who do you say that I am? Peter answers, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. He gets praised for this. He basically says, "Upon your confession, this is where I'm going to build my church." But then later on, immediately following that, Jesus starts talking about how the Son of man is going to have to suffer and die and He's going to be buried and then He's going to rise from the dead. Peter says, "No, that can't happen." Then Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan." So you see the ups and the downs of Peter immediately one after the other.

Once again, we have Peter trying to give, in essence trying to convince Jesus, let's just stay up here on the mountain top where everything is good, where Your glory shines forth, where there's no struggle, there's no pain, there's no sin, there's no suffering, and there's no talk of death here. We're just talking glory. So Peter, to some degree, I think is trying to, again, redirect Jesus' thoughts. You really don't want to go to Jerusalem and die. That's hard work. That's suffering. That's challenging. You really want to stay here on the mountaintop where everything is good. Or actually I think what Peter is saying, "I really want to stay up on the mountaintop where everything is good. I don't want to deal with the suffering and the pain of everyday life. I don't want to deal with the sin and everything else that goes along with this world."

I think you and I can recognize that feeling in and of ourselves. How many times have we really wished that we could be on the mountaintop and be in the presence of God, be in the house of the Lord, even if we're a doorkeeper, just so that we don't have to deal with the struggles of daily life, just so we don't have to deal with the pain of broken relationships, the pain of a dysfunctional society and the pain of sin and sorrow and the physical pain of our own bodies getting older and breaking down. How often do we wish that things would just be easier. If life would just be a little bit easier, then I could. We tend to think that if things are easy, it'll be better, but Jesus never promises easy.

He does promise his presence in our daily lives, but it's not always going to be a mountaintop experience. In fact, very seldom is it a mountaintop experience. What is most important on the mountain top or in the valleys, in the daily grind? Immediately after Peter says, "Let's build these tents," God, the father shows up and speaks to him. "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." It's almost as if he's telling Peter, "Peter, listen to Jesus. I know what you want. I know what you desire, but listen to Jesus. Listen to His word."

Then you've got here in 2 Peter, Peter retelling his experience about how he was on the mountaintop and how he heard the voice of God and how this was so important to sustain him in his daily ministry, to trust that God's prophetic word is where we are to put our focus. That will enable us to deal with the trials of this world, to deal with the hardship and the heartache that comes from living in this world. We may not always know the answer. We may not always understand why things are happening the way they are happening. Things may not always go well for us, but God's word is always firm. God's word never changes.

It is not coming from someone's own personal interpretation, but it is men carried along by the Holy Spirit, and that Holy Spirit is what God has given to us in our baptisms, that we might be carried along as well, as strong and as faithful as that word is, so is the spirit. Through the word, we receive the spirit. Through the spirit, we receive hope. Our hope is not in vain. Peter's experience, even though he didn't understand what was going on, through the prophecies, through the fulfillment of the prophecies on the cross and in the grave and through the resurrection confirmed to Peter that God's word is where we must remain, not on the mountaintop, not in the tents of glory, not in the house of the Lord where everything is secure and safe, but rest and be secure in the word of God no matter where you are because he will sustain you. He will strengthen you.

Just as Christ was glorified and went home to prepare a place, so also will we be glorified and live in the place that he has prepared for all eternity. We will go home someday. What a joyous day that will be.

May the grace, mercy, and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be and abide with you always, now and forever more, unto life everlasting. Amen.