

## Transfiguration of our LORD, January 29, 2023

**Readings: Exodus 3:1-14, 2 Peter 1: 16-21, Matthew 17: 1-9**

### *Jesus Is Transfigured and Manifests His Glory*

The Lord appeared to Moses in the light of the burning bush (Ex. 3:1–14). Later Moses' face would shine with the light of God's glory when he came down from Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:29–35). At the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared with the One who is the Light of Light Himself (Matt. 17:1–9). Jesus' glory as God shines with brilliant splendor in and through His human nature. By this epiphany, our Lord confirmed the prophetic word (2 Pet. 1:16–21), revealing that He is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He manifested His majesty as the eternal Son of the Father, and He wonderfully foreshowed our adoption as sons (Collect). We who have been baptized into Christ's body are given a glimpse of the glory that we will share with Him in the resurrection on the Last Day.

### **Sermon Transcript:**

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

We have the story of the transfiguration, and we need to remember the context of this, because it's very important to see what's going on. The chapter before this, Jesus is beginning to tell His disciples what's going to happen to the Son of Man, to Jesus Christ Himself. He tells them that He's going to head towards Jerusalem and the people are going to reject Him and He's going to suffer and He is going to die.

But before that while He's saying all this, or right before He says all this, He asks His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Some people say Moses, some people say Elijah, some people say the prophet, and he points to the disciples and says, "Who do you say that I am?"

And of course, Peter, the first one to open his mouth in almost any circumstance, good or bad, he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus praises him and says, "You were led by the Holy Spirit to say this. Blessed are you, Peter. And upon your confession, that is how we will build the church. All who call upon the name of Jesus will be saved." That is the foundation, or the rock, upon which the church is built.

And then, two verses later, basically, Jesus tells him He's going to go to Jerusalem, He's going to die, and Peter says, "God forbid! That shouldn't happen to You." And Jesus, of course, turns to Peter and says, "Satan, get behind Me." So within like five verses, Peter goes from speaking the words of the Holy Spirit to having Jesus tell him to get behind Him because he's acting like Satan.

Peter is inconsistent in whether he's really following after the Word of God and whether he is just speaking for himself. Which is comforting for me. If God still loved Peter, then there's hope for me. Because Peter never knew when to keep his mouth shut, and he sometimes got it right, but more often than not, he got it wrong until finally, at the end, the crucifixion, resurrection, Pentecost, he receives the Holy Spirit. Then he starts preaching with clarity, but even then he makes mistakes, like all of us.

But anyway, so Jesus is preparing to go to Jerusalem. He's preparing to fulfill the promise given throughout the entire Old Testament. The salvation is coming through a man, through a man who is born of a woman, but who is also God. And that's interesting, because you're to connect this then to the Old Testament reading.

Moses sees the burning bush and the burning bush, it's not burning up. Moses goes and he sees this revelation of God, and God speaks to Moses. It's interesting. How does God speak to us? He speaks to us through His Word. And what is His Word? His Word is Jesus Christ. So Christ, the second person in the Trinity, is already there in the Old Testament, and He's speaking to Moses here in the Old Testament. And what is He preparing Moses to do? To go to Egypt to save His people out of captivity and to bring them into the promised land. And how are they saved? By the blood of the lamb that was sacrificed and put on their doors.

Now Jesus' glory is revealed again. He's talking again with Moses and Elijah. And what is He getting ready to do? He's getting ready to save His people and bring them out of the captivity of sin into the promised land of life and salvation. And how does He do that? Through His blood shed on the cross.

You should see these parallels and you should connect them together. That's part of the reason why Moses shows up in this transfiguration. Now, transfiguration, nice big word. What does it mean? It means that His appearance was changed, that He was transfigured. He was changed before their very eyes and the glory and majesty of God shown through.

Now, we have to be very careful to remember this, it is clearly stated in the Scriptures that His appearance changed, not His nature. He was always 100% man and 100% God. The glory of God was always there with Him, because it was Him, but it was humiliated, it was subdued, so that God's glory might be fulfilled in the death on the cross.

Every once in a while, the glory of God and the majesty of the second person in the Trinity bursts through in Jesus. He heals the sick. He makes the blind to see. He walks on water. He raises a few people from the dead. He does all these miraculous things. And you see a burst of the glory and majesty of God coming out at those times.

And it's the same thing here. He's getting ready for the ultimate miracle, His entire purpose for coming to earth and taking on the form of a man, to save us from our sins, to die on the cross. And His glory breaks through once more, preparing the people for what's going to happen next. Just like He prepared Moses for what was going to happen next. The glory and might is shown so that they might be ready for the sorrow and suffering that they will face. In other words, He didn't die by mistake, Jesus Christ. He died for a purpose. It was part of the plan. It wasn't as if He wasn't strong enough to be able to resist the cross. It was because He was strong enough to go to the cross, because that was His point.

So Moses and Elijah show up and they're glorified. Jesus is glorified, and they're with Him. Moses, being a representation of the entire Old Testament law, Jesus is fulfilling that. Elijah representing the prophets and the promises given to the Israelites of the coming of the Messiah. And also God promised specifically that Elijah would come right before His coming. In Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, the last verses talk about Elijah, God sending Elijah.

Now, we know that that is also John the Baptist, but here we have literally Elijah show up, and they're talking. What are they talking about? I don't know. We don't have a record of it. I assume that they're talking about what's going to happen. They're talking about how Jesus is fulfilling everything. Moses and Elijah are rejoicing in the fact that their hope is finally being fulfilled.

And while it's there, while Jesus is glorified, the majesty of God is shining forth, who speaks? Peter. Because he's got to say something. He doesn't quite know what to do, so he says, "Lord, it's good for us to be here." And Jesus looked around like, "What are you talking about?" Peter just interrupts, and "Lord, it's good that we

are here." That's good. Yeah, it's good to see the glory of God. But of course Peter doesn't stop there. He says, "Let us build three tents that you might reside in them." He's just saying that, we don't have that in Matthew but in another Gospel it says, Peter was just saying that because he didn't know what else to say. He had to say something.

But building three tents, as if Moses and Elijah and Jesus were the same, equal in authority. That's part of the reason why the voice of God comes at that point, to make it very clear that we don't listen to Moses and Elijah except through the Son. The Son is the most important one to listen to. "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." Remember, Peter, when you told Jesus that you weren't supposed to go die on the cross, you weren't supposed to suffer? Listen to Him. He knows what he's talking about. Here in His message, in His life, is salvation.

And so this also, this transfiguration, is a manifestation of the glory of God to prepare Jesus, and us, for the coming suffering. That we know His glory and majesty is fulfilled, not in might and power, but in suffering and death. Because He's not here to conquer the world. He's not here to conquer nations. He's here to conquer sin, death, and the Devil himself. And He has done it on the cross. He has the power and majesty to do it, and He did it. And so this transfiguration time also makes it clear, as Peter says, "Look, we're not imagining this. We're not making this story up. I was there. I saw the glory of God. I heard the voice. But even more than that, I have the Word written. I have the prophetic Word."

He's talking about the Old Testament and the New Testament, which tells us exactly what is going on, because prophecy does not come from man's own mind or interpretation, but it comes from God, therefore it's reliable, it's trustworthy, and it is where we put our hope, and in nothing else but Christ.

In this world, we will have trials and tribulations, struggles and hardships, both personal and corporate. But take heart, the glory of God is with us. We do not need to be afraid, because that glory was manifested in the cross, and the glory of the cross was manifested to us in our baptisms, where we were claimed and adopted, just like baby Trenton, just like everyone else. We were adopted by Christ into His family and part of His kingdom. And when He comes again, we do not need to be afraid. We don't need to bow our heads in fear like Peter, James, and John did. But we can look up with joy and thanksgiving for our king has come to take us home to be with Him for all eternity.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.