

Rev. Matthew Versemann  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Decatur, Illinois  
Transfiguration Sunday  
February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**“Revealed Glory – Hidden Glory”**

God’s PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Matthew 17,

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain....There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white - whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

The glory of the Lord is a frightful glory. Few have seen it, and even they caught only a glimpse of it. Moses saw the back side of God from the cleft in the rock, and even then his face shined so brightly that the Israelites asked him to cover up his face. Elijah caught a glimpse of it, but had to be hidden in a cave to endure it. Isaiah saw God’s Glory in a vision, and was convinced he was a dead man – and did the only thing he could think of doing: He confessed his sin. The shepherds saw it over Bethlehem’s fields the night Jesus was born and they were filled with fear. John saw it on the Island of Patmos, and fell to the ground as though dead. God’s Glory is a frightful glory to sinners.

God's Word, speaking to sinners, says, "***No one may look at God and yet live,***" except, we might add, when God in His mercy permits them to see just a glimpse of it. On this day Peter, James, and John are permitted to see a glimpse of Jesus in His divine glory, and live to tell about it. Jesus was changed, transfigured, "morphed", in front of the three disciples: Peter, James, and John. He glowed with an unearthly glow, shining with the radiance of heaven. His clothes became as white as the light, "***whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them***". Matthew tells us, "***His faced shined like the sun.***" Every cell of Jesus' human body glowed or shined with the Glory of God, because in Jesus the fullness of God dwells bodily.

And this glimpse of Jesus' divine Glory left a profound and indelible impression on Peter, who bore witness to it, years later, when he wrote these words in his epistle: "***For we did not follow cleverly invented myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased," we ourselves heard the voice, borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.***"

Peter heard the voice of God, saw the Glory of God, and laid down his life to testify to Jesus. This isn't some cleverly concocted story. Men do not willingly die for a lie. But Peter willingly died, testifying to the truth of what he heard God say, and what he saw Jesus do. This is eyewitness-attested fact, just as Jesus' death is eyewitness-attested fact, and Jesus' resurrection is an eyewitness-attested fact. The disciples knew they were reporting things that had never been seen or heard before. They knew people would be skeptical. Who would believe them? And yet Peter James and John backed up their eye-witnesses testimony to Jesus' glory, death, and resurrection with their lives. As has been said, "***Myths do not make martyrs.***" They heard the voice from the cloud proclaim: "***This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!***" They were there.

This wasn't some sort of "spiritual experience" or "holy hallucination". This was a hard fact of history. Often times we hear people say something like: "*I'm spiritual, but not religious*". Our answer should be: "*I'm religious, but not spiritual*", meaning that what we believe is based on eyewitness-attested fact, not subjective feelings, no matter how '*spiritual*' they might seem at the time.

What we believe and confess is not some clever myth, or abstract experience, but an eyewitness fact - attested to by three sane, rational men, who had nothing to gain by making this up. They saw Jesus' face shine like the sun. They saw Jesus' clothes sparkle like snow. They heard the Father's voice. They saw Moses – long dead for centuries. They saw Elijah – taken to heaven in a chariot of fire hundreds of years earlier – and there they were, alive and well, talking to Jesus about His Exodus.

The disciples were rightly terrified, and for a moment speechless. Until, Matthew says, Jesus spoke to them like a Savior, and said, "***Do not be afraid!***" Peter wanted to preserve the moment, and build three bungalos: one for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. That might sound crazy, but what would you have done? You would have wanted to preserve the moment also. But then, the voice of the Father intervened. This was a moment was to be witnessed - but not a Kodak moment. Why not? Jesus still had work to do. In fact, Jesus could not enter back into the glory they were witnessing, or give that glory to us ,without alot of suffering, alot of bleeding, and alot of dying. The Transfiguration of Jesus was to give them, and us, a glimpse of the Glory Jesus would come back into, and that He would win for us, by His death and resurrection.

Matthew tells us that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about His upcoming Exodus. But Jesus' exodus was not as easy as an exodus from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Jesus' exodus was an exodus from death to resurrection. Jesus exodus was an exodus from the depths of hell in our place, to the heights of heaven to prepare a place for us. But here's the key: you and I could never share in Jesus' heavenly glory, without Jesus' going through His deathly hollows. If all that Jesus did was to come to earth, and give us a '*shine Jesus, shine*' moment we'd have no forgiveness, no life, no salvation, no heaven, and no glory. We would be lost forever. The only way we can see and live in Jesus' glory is through His blood, sweat, tears and death.

That's why the cloud soon hid the glory, and the Father had to remind the disciples: "***listen to Jesus.***" And this is also why Jesus told the disciples not to say a thing about what they saw, until "***the Son of Man had risen from the dead***". Before His glory, comes the gory, of Jesus' bloody substitutionary death. Before Jesus can give us His heavenly glory, He has to hang dead on a cross, bearing both the weight and the wrath of your sin, my sin, and the whole world's sin. Before you and I can ever see Jesus in His victorious and heavenly glory, we must see Him broken, bleeding, dying on a cross. in that eerie and hidden glory of His sacrificial death, followed by His resurrection from the dead, and His Ascension back into His heavenly glory, which He laid aside for no other reason than to purchase a place in heaven for us!

No matter how "inglorious" and "gory" the cross may appear, you will never see a greater glory than when you see Jesus dying on the cross. Why? Jesus, hanging dead on the cross, reveals most clearly the love that is in the Father's heart for you.

When the Father's voice from heaven declared, "***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him,***" that was the same voice we heard at Jesus' baptism, where the Father circled out Jesus as: "***The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.***" And the Father tells us to "***Listen to Jesus!***" Why? John 6 says, only He: "***has the words of eternal life.***" You've heard those words of life, and so have I: "***Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven!***" "***There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***" "***Because I live, you will live also.***" In other word, you have to be told why Jesus is hanging dead on a cross, or you would never know. But now you know. Colossians 1, "***God reconciled the world to Himself, by making peace, through Christ's blood, shed on the cross.***"

So why the Transfiguration? Jesus was preparing His disciples for the road ahead, when His Glory would be seem to disappear in rejection, betrayal and crucifixion. By His transfiguration Jesus was giving the disciples, and us, a glimpse of His resurrection victory, and His ascended glory, even before He dies. This is how certain Jesus' victory is. Jesus is giving the disciples a glimpse of his victory, and resurrected glory, so that when they see Jesus beaten, bloodied, bruised, broken, and dying, they wouldn't forget what they saw on the mountain this day. When it looks like I've lost. I haven't. So don't lose hope. And just as you see Moses and Elijah sharing in my glory, you will share in my resurrected victory and glory too. **Page 4**

You and I would prefer to see Heavenly glory, rather than Jesus' gory death on a cross. We often prefer the minimal healings of our bodies, rather than the maximum healing of Jesus' forgiveness, life, and salvation. We prefer the power and the majesty of Jesus shining in unearthly glory, than a beaten and bloodied Jesus hanging dead on a cross. But here's the rub: Only the crucified Jesus can save you! If all that Jesus ever did was to appear shining and radiant and beautiful on a mountain to three of His disciples, you and I would still be lost in sin and death. Although, we may not like to think or talk about all of the gore of Jesus' death, the really Good News is that the battle for our souls and our salvation, was a war in which shed blood wins. And it is Jesus' death that delivers His heavenly glory to us.

Being a Christian is often times anything but glorious isn't it? The mountaintop experiences are rare to non-existent. Our lives are filled with doubts, sufferings, times of testing, difficulties that defy explanation, and prayers that seem to go unanswered. And all that Jesus gives us to pull us through those times are nothing but a Word of promise, a splash of water, a bit of bread, and a sip of wine defeat the devil, the world and our flesh, and we wonder: "Is it really enough to save me?" And the answer is: YES! A THOUSAND TIMES YES! They are enough. Jesus' victory was so certain, He already showed us a glimpse of it before He died; and then He actually went through with winning it on the cross, and by His resurrection. For us, and our salvation, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, DONE! Was born of the Virgin Mary, DONE! Suffered under Pontius Pilate, DONE! Was crucified, DONE! Died, DONE! And was buried, DONE! He descended into Hell to proclaim His victory, DONE! On the third day He rose victoriously, DONE! He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us, DONE! And IS (present tense) seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, DONE, AND BEING DONE! And you and I are just waiting for the day, when Jesus will return to give us by sight, His glorious and heavenly home, which are already ours' by faith!

Whether it looks like it or not, folks, the victory is already ours' from the moment Jesus cried out on the cross: "***It is finished!***" Now Jesus, wasn't finished. He rose again on the third day from the dead. And because Jesus isn't finished, we're not finished either. Jesus promises, "***Whoever believes in Me will live, even if they die.***" But what is finished, is the full and total payment of every sin that would rob us of living in Jesus' never-ending glory in the paradise of heaven. That's finished. Pg 5

In closing, the heavenly glory of Jesus' transfiguration, may still be hidden from our eyes, but it's already ours' in our crucified, risen, and ascended Savior. One day, like Peter, James, and John, we too will see Jesus' glorious face, in resurrected bodies. The transfiguration of Jesus, and Jesus shining in all of His glory, is a sneak preview of coming attractions, for all who trust in Jesus! The transfiguration of Jesus, shining in all of His glory, is a sneak preview of coming attractions, when you and I, together with Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John, angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, will forever see Jesus' shining in the heavenly glory, that He won for us by the hidden and eerie glory of forgiving death. That glory is already ours'. It's just not yet ours' to see. It's already ours' now, by faith, and one day it will be ours' by sight. For now it's hidden from our eyes, under Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. But it will be revealed. For now we live in weakness, but we will live in glory. Until that day, when we participate fully in Jesus' resurrected, ascended, and heavenly glory, let us hold onto the Good News that that glory is already ours' by faith, and delivered to us in the Promisory Notes of Jesus words, water, and supper. As a result, we can already say with Peter, what we will forever say with all the saints in heaven when we arrive: ***"It is good Lord, to be here."*** Amen.