

Transfiguration 2017

“What Happens on the Mountain ... Doesn’t Stay on the Mountain”

Matthew 17:1-9

There Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Our family had a great weekend! It was my father-in-law’s 90th birthday, and all of the kids and many of the grandkids were here. And one of the grandchildren made a poster of many of the changes between back in 1927 and today in 2017. Cost of things, what songs were #1.

Change happens! In all of our lives, change happens. So I did a little research on how things have changed since Trinity’s birthday back in 1854.

- Bread was 22 cents
- A bottle of whiskey was 8 cents
- A blanket was \$100 ... that seems high to me. People either made their own or used an animal pelt
- A Colt Revolver was \$10.00. Probably needed one of those in 1854.
- Pair of shoes \$1.00, but boots were \$24.00 (riding horses everywhere). Over 60% of people in America were farmers.

In the Church...

- Services were conducted in German. (I was talking to some members who were in Confirmation Class during the transition to English, and they had to memorize from the Catechism in both German and English. Double Memory Work. Kids today have it so easy.) I’ll be they did public questioning too.
- There were different approaches to life insurance, dancing, some cards.

You get the idea. Times change.

Thankfully, some things never change. Jesus Christ is the same Yesterday, Today, and Forever. He is our Changeless Savior in an ever-changing world.

Jesus takes Peter, James and John up on the mountain, probably Mt Herman which was 9000 feet above sea level. It was quite a hike to the top. (Their fitbit would have gotten a workout.) 3 very interesting things happened up there, 3 changes.

First, Jesus' face shone like the sun, His clothing became white as lightening. The disciples were receiving a special glimpse of the true glory of King Jesus. Jesus is truly man and also truly God. St. Paul describes this as **the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**. The Rabbi that these disciples were following is the Son of God, come into the world.

Then Moses and Elijah appear out of nowhere. Moses, the one who received the law, the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai. Elijah, the great Old Testament prophet. Why were Moses and Elijah here? They confirmed Jesus ministry. He is the fulfillment of the law. He kept the law perfectly for us on our behalf. He is the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy. He is the long-predicted, the long-awaited Messiah.

And third, a cloud comes and covers them on that mountain. You know that in the Old Testament the cloud of God led God's people by day through the wilderness, the cloud was a symbol of God's presence in the temple. And from the cloud came the voice of God: **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him.**

The disciples had never seen anything like this before. And it would strengthen them, and encourage them. They would soon head back down the mountain, as Jesus would turn His head toward Jerusalem.

One person said this Transfiguration Event was kind of like a "scenic overlook" on the journey towards to the cross. Do you remember those scenic overlooks? When I was growing up, my dad would be driving along the highway, not big interstates like today, and there would a sign telling about a **scenic overlook**. And we would pull off the road, for just a few minutes, and admire the view. A valley. A lake. A mountain. Something, something unusual and beautiful. And he would take a picture of my

brother, sister, and me. And then, back in the car, back on the road, back on the journey. But now ... REFRESHED. Just a little scenic overlook.

This Transfiguration Event lasted only a few minutes. But these disciples would need this revelation of who Jesus is and why He came. You know, we all need a spiritual scenic overlook. A daily reminder of who Jesus is, why Jesus came. We need a scenic overlook where we can let go of our problems, see Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and hear from God.

Come to think of it, worship is like that. A peaceful, beautiful time where we let go of our problems and focus on who Jesus is and why He came. To come into His presence in Holy Communion, and to leave refreshed.

We all need that scenic overlook in life. So it's NO WONDER that Peter wanted to stay up on the mountain. **Lord, it's good for us to be here. Let's hang out up here. I'll build houses for everybody. Let's not go back down the mountain.**

But what happened on the mountain wasn't meant to stay on the mountain. In fact, the reminder that Jesus is the Son of God, and He is the long-awaited Savior, is why they HAD TO GO BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN.

The Bible tells us what happened after Jesus and the Disciples came down the mountain. They came down the mountain and found a **CONFUSING SITUATION**. A man brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus, the disciples tried to help, but they couldn't do it.

In our lives, we come upon confusing situations that we try to handle, but things get worse. Even when we pray, the solution does not always come quickly, nor is the

solution always the for which we pray. Those times remind us, though, that Jesus is absolutely all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving. His will is best.

Also, they came down the mountain and soon Jesus and His disciples had to face **COMMON SITUATION**. Does Jesus pay His taxes? Even after this mountaintop experience, Jesus still has to take care of the day-to-day responsibilities... like taxes. There could be days when we wish we could go on a spiritual retreat and stay there for a long, long time; but we still have to face the daily responsibilities of living: Jobs, Family, Taking out the Trash, Laundry. The pile up, and they represent blessings, through blessings often come with responsibilities.

And they came down that mountain, heading to Jerusalem, and Jesus gives them some **CATESTROPHIC, LIFE-CHANGING NEWS**. Jesus says, **The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men. They will Kill Him, but on the 3rd day He will be raised to life.**

The Bible says that the disciples were filled with grief! They were filled with grief. They were broken-hearted. And very soon, Jesus' words came true. He was arrested, sentenced, nailed to the cross, and He died for our sins. But in 3 days, Jesus is alive.

Unexpected situations touch our lives, events that change us. But we know that Jesus never leaves us . Jesus is with us, even as we endure the unexpected challenges of life.

Yes, Word and Sacrament, like the Transfiguration, offers us a beautiful scenic overlook before facing the challenges of life. Jesus IS the Son of God. Jesus is the long-awaited Savior. Jesus die and rose to pay for our sins, and to open the gates of heaven.

And God the Father gave a directive to the disciples and to us, directions on how to face the changes and challenges we meet on the road of life. God says, "Listen to Jesus. Listen to Him."

- Are you burdened with doubt? Listen to Him!
- Are you weighed down by worry? Listen to Him!
- Are you paralyzed by fear? Listen to Him!
- Are you chained by addiction? Listen to Him!
- Are you aching with loneliness? Listen to Him!
- Are you struggling with a loved one? Listen to Him!
- Are you scared of a disease? Listen to Him!
- Are you grieving? Listen to Him!

That's why Jesus left the mountain of Transfiguration to go the way of the cross, to die and rise for you.

Every day, Listen to Jesus, you might even ask Jesus what He is trying to teach you through the experience, as well as asking for His strength and power and peace.

Because those blessings received on the mountain are not meant to stay up there, but to be received and shared as we live in the valley.

And when you're tired, when you need to be refreshed, pull off the road, take a look at the scenery of Christ, and be refreshed in word and Sacrament.