

Transfiguration Sunday – February 15, 2015

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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It Is Good For Us to Be Here

Mark 9:2-9 NIV

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3) His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4) And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5) **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." 6) He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) 7) Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" 8) Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. 9) As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Friends in Christ Jesus;

It's cold outside. It's snowing. The roads are slippery and the wind is blowing. After an inordinate amount of time on the road, you reach your destination and when you do you exclaim, "It's good to be here." Thankfully you haven't had to deal with that scenario too often this winter. You were reluctant to go at first, you didn't think it would be fun, there were better things you could do with your time – but then amazingly you found yourself having a great time, "It's good to be here, I'm glad I came," you think to yourself. The family get-together was a long time in coming. It seemed like it would never happen, but now you are all together – "It's good to be here, we ought to do this more often, the family says." A person escapes serious injury in an accident or recovers from a life-threatening illness. "Praise God! It's good to be here," they rejoice.

It's good to be here – it's a phrase we've said before, probably in a variety of situations and circumstances. Peter said it to Jesus in our text: "**Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.**" Where was here? For Peter, James and John; here was on a high mountain top with Jesus. It was a place where they saw God's glory and it was a place where they heard God speak.

Dear Friends it is good for us to be here. Where is here? Here is in the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ and in the presence of Jesus who has promised us: **Wherever two or three gather in my name I am there with them.** (cf. Matthew 18:20) Perhaps there are special reasons why you feel that it is good to be here. Perhaps you're not quite so sure it's good to be here. Perhaps you're somewhere in the middle.

But when we consider that this, too, is a place where we like the disciples in our text can see the glory of God and hear God speak to us – well then we must conclude:

Theme: It Is Good For Us to Be Here

1. To see God's Glory
2. To hear God speak

Six days prior to the events of our text Jesus had engaged his disciples in a rather solemn and serious conversation about himself and his future relationship with them. It was heavy stuff. It was a conversation which took a number of twists and turns. Jesus began by questioning his disciples about who people said he was. They told him what people were saying; "**Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.**" 15) "**But what about you?"** he asked. "**Who do you say I am?"**

16) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:14-16 NIV) Jesus responded by saying that Peter's confession was the foundation on which his church would be built.

Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. **From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.** (Matthew 16:21 NIV) Well that was more than Peter could bear – finally he had enough of it all and blurted out: **"Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (23) Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."** (Matthew 16:22-23 NIV)

Now, **"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone."** We can never know for sure what was going through the minds of those three disciples as they hiked up that mountain slope with Jesus but they must have been wondering what this was all about. Most likely, their emotions were mixed as they wondered if Jesus would tell them more about what would happen to him and what it would mean for them. I doubt that they had any inkling of what would take place on that mountaintop and I wonder just how good they felt about the journey.

Jesus knew what they needed and what he needed. They needed some time away – not to enjoy some rest and relaxation – but time away to enjoy the kind solitude that could only be found in a place like that rugged mountain area -- a place where they would be from distractions, a place where Jesus could have quiet time for prayer and reflection together with his three disciples. Ultimately it would be a place where Jesus, Peter, James and John would receive divine encouragement. It would be a place where they could see God's glory and hear God speak.

Surely as we think about this, we realize that there are times when we need places like that. We live fast paced, hectic, chaotic lives – we need to have a place where we can get away, where we can shut off the hubbub of life and enjoy some quiet time with our Lord – seeing his glory and hearing his voice. For Jesus and his disciples it was, on this occasion, a mountain top. For us today, now, it is the quiet sanctuary of the worship area of our church facility. At other times, it may be in the privacy of our homes or a quiet area in nature where we can spend time undisturbed with God and his Word.

It's good for us to be here to see God's glory and hear God speak. Through the Word inspired by the Holy Spirit you and I are able to share a glimpse of the glory God revealed to Peter, James and John on the mountain. A glory that led Peter to say, "Lord it is good for us to be here." **There he was transfigured before them. 3) His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4) And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.**

The sight is hard to describe with words, but the Spirit inspired Scriptures get the point across. A miraculous change overcame Jesus – his clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone could bleach them, as bright as a flash of lightning and his face was as blinding as the sun. Now the disciples were seeing what they had heard from Jesus. Jesus had told them he was God. He had demonstrated that fact with the miracles he had performed. But now six days after he had explained the need for his humiliation and spoken in no uncertain terms to them of his suffering, death, crucifixion and resurrection – they saw his divine splendor and majesty shining through his human nature in a most amazing way. Peter and the other two men were eyewitness of Jesus' majesty – there was no need to doubt what he had told them about himself and his resurrection. It's obvious the full impact of this event didn't sink home immediately.

It's hard to know what was more amazing to Peter, to James and to John, the glorious appearance of Jesus or the fact that before their very eyes were Moses and Elijah – two OT believers talking with Jesus. Dear

friends, that was truly a little glimpse of heaven on earth. It's no wonder that Peter exclaimed, "It's good for us to be here," and it's no wonder that he wanted to preserve the moment. **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." 6) (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)**

It's good for us to be here dear friends to see the glory of God. Take a look around you and see the glory of God. No; there are no bright, shining faces. There's no one come back from the dead – but God's glory is on display here. You and I are evidence of his glory – sinners by nature, people who are often confused about things and who at times like Peter can't see the things of God because we are overly concerned about things of men – that's what we are. But what has God done for us? He has called us to faith in his Son and declared that we are a holy people as Peter reminds us: (1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV) **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10) Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

Now the Scriptures speak of us as the body of Christ and remind us to see each other as a vital part of God's family. As we behold that amazing grace of God – which has made us all members of his family and heirs of eternal life that's God's glorious ways shining through. As we gather together to praise our Lord and sing his praises – we have a foreshadowing – a glimpse of the fellowship of believers that we will enjoy in heaven where we will be face to face with our Lord and Savior in all of his glorious splendor. We have a little taste of heaven.

As we gather together here as God's children, God speaks to us through his word. It's good to be here with our brothers and sisters in Christ to behold in them and with them the glory of God and to hear God speak to us.

Before anyone could respond to Peter's suggestion about building shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah God himself entered the conversation. **Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"**

God is speaking to us today, not from a bright cloud, but from the pages of Holy Scripture. Today God uses those Scriptures to point us to his Son, the one who pleased him by following his will perfectly in our place. The Scriptures point us to the one who paid for our sins with his holy, innocent sufferings and death. The Scriptures remind us of the fellowship we have with God through him. Listen to him as you listen to the Scriptures and as you live according to them.

The disciples heard the Father speak from the cloud and it was a terrifying experience for them. Matthew's Gospel reports that **when the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7) But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."** (NIV)

Suddenly the glorious event was over and once again, they were alone with Jesus – the one who displayed his glory as true God. Sinful human beings are afraid of the holy, almighty God. Even minor demonstrations of his power like an approaching tornado or the eruption of a volcano can cause people to drop to their knees in fear. Peter, James, and John reacted according to their sinful human nature when they heard God speak. They were scared out of their wits. In love, God reaches out to them as Jesus goes to them and touches them, calming their fears. **"Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."**

Today Jesus says the same to us. As we bow down before God – humbly confessing our sins, he says to us: Get up, don't be afraid, your sins are forgiven. And we rejoice to hear his words. Eagerly we wait for his next words. And as we participate in worship those words come to us from the Holy Scriptures from the

Psalms, from the OT lessons, the Epistle Lessons and the Gospel writings. Those words bid us to believe in Jesus to live as his children to let him set aside our fears, to call upon him in time of need, to praise him for his marvelous works to rejoice in our status as God's children and to work together to praise his holy name.

Our Lesson for today omits these details and simply tells us that **when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. 9) As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.** Jesus had not, yet, completed the work he had been chosen and appointed to do as the Christ. He had not yet been, **declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.** (Romans 1:4 NIV) Until that happened, they were to keep this information to themselves.

That's no longer the case. We no longer need to keep quiet about this. Following his resurrection from the dead Jesus took his disciples to another mountain top where gave them and us the instructions: (Mark 16:15 NIV) **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."** Jesus says to us: (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV) **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Jesus promises to be with us, to empower and equip us to be his witnesses, to live as his children, to proclaim his praises as we gather together with each other in his name. It's no wonder the sacred writer reminds us: (Hebrews 10:23-25 NIV) **Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25) not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another ...**

It's good for us to be here. As we heard, Peter wanted to freeze time and to remain on that mountain top with Jesus and Moses and Elijah. Perhaps we've felt that way too – that it would be nice if we could remain alone in a solitary place with the Lord even now. That was not possible for the disciples and it will not be possible for us either. Soon our time away from the hubbub of life will be over and Jesus will come with us to the plain. He'll come with us out into the world to take on our busy schedules and challenging activities with renewed vigor and confidence in his blessings.

But as we go about our affairs with the Lord's help, let's not forget that it was good to be here to see God's glory and to hear God speak to us. Let's not make the mistake that is so often made after people say it's good to be here, we ought to do this more often. All too often those reunions fail to take place -- too much time passes before the groups and families get together again. Don't let that happen.

Jesus' transfiguration helped to prepare his disciples for the journey they would take with him as he walked the path to the cross and his resurrection. Once again the Holy Spirit has used these events to prepare us for our Lenten Journey with Jesus – a journey which we will commemorate and observe in our special midweek Lenten services.

It was good for us to be here today to behold God's glory and to hear him speak to us. We can repeat that same experience each time we gather here in the Lord's house to worship him. God will be here on Wednesday to reveal his glory and to speak to you. God will be here next Sunday to reveal his glory and to speak to you. God will be here. Will you? It will be good to be here. Amen.