

Last Sunday After Epiphany (Transfiguration) – February 11, 2018
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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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.

This past week marked the official start of the 2018 Olympics. Team USA sent the largest group of athletes to South Korea for any nation in history with 242 set to compete, and naturally, they couldn't contain their excitement as they marched in the ceremony representing the United States. The mountains and ski slopes of South Korea will become familiar scenes to those who tune in to watch the games. No doubt, those who will compete in the events on those mountains will experience some memorable events on them, win or lose.

This morning our text takes us to another mountain where three of Jesus' disciples had an experience that they would never forget. As we look at that mountain we are reminded of Jesus' Divinity, we're reminded of Jesus suffering for us and we're reminded of Jesus' resurrection.

The days of Jesus' earthly ministry are drawing to a close in our text. And as that ministry was drawing to a close Jesus was carefully preparing his disciples for what was coming. He knew full well that in order to win salvation for sinners that he was going to have to suffer and die for their sins. He also knew full well that he was going to rise triumphantly from death. And just six days before the events of our text Jesus had spoken about this for the first time to his disciples.

The disciples didn't handle that information very well. In fact, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Peter and the rest simply could not believe that this was the path Jesus needed to take – no doubt, they had visions of an earthly kingdom stirring in their heads. They had seen too much to doubt that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Peter had proclaimed that they believed Jesus was that Messiah – the Christ. But they all failed to realize that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world and that his kingdom could only be established if he offered his innocent life as the ransom price for sinners. Only through his death and resurrection would they be able to enjoy a place in his heavenly kingdom. Jesus spoke harshly to Peter on this occasion saying, "Get behind me, Satan!" "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Now, after six days have passed Jesus; took three of those disciples including Peter up to a mountaintop as our text tells us. **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.** Jesus was changed in form. And the changes were visible. The changes revealed the divine glory which he had set aside as a part of his humiliation. But now the Father chose to honor Jesus before these disciples by allowing that glory to shine forth. And shine it did.

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

Peter never forgot that experience. In his second Epistle, Peter wrote: (2 Peter 1:16-18 NIV) **We did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (18) We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.**

John never forgot that experience either. He wrote: (John 1:14 NIV) **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

James also spoke of the glorious Jesus Christ as he encouraged his fellow believers in the Lord not to show favoritism -- (James 2:1 NIV) **My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.**

We need to be reminded of the divine nature of Jesus – that he always was and always will be true God. It is because Jesus was true God that his blood was holy and precious enough to wash away all the stains of our sins. It's because Jesus is true God that we can entrust our bodies and souls to his care with the confidence that he will keep them safe for all eternity.

It was no accident that the Father allowed this transfiguration to take place on the Mountain. It was to be an encouragement to Jesus and his disciples. They needed to hear the Father say that he loved Jesus and was pleased with him because soon Jesus would be subjected to the wrath of his heavenly Father – the wrath that rightly should have been vented against sinners. Peter, James, and John saw the glory before they saw the shame.

As Jesus stood on the mountain in his state of glory he was joined by two other glorious individuals. **And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.** It becomes clear that this event was a preparation for what was to come when we read Luke's account in which he tells us that They spoke about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem.

That departure included his suffering and death that would set them and us free from slavery to sin and death. And so, as we look at the events which took place on this mountain we are reminded of Jesus' suffering for us! This glimpse of glory prepares us to endure the account of Jesus' humiliation will be part of the focus of our special midweek Lenten services which begin this week. The word Lent is derived from an old English word *lenctin* that means lengthen. It refers to the lengthening of the days that we experience this time of year. As the days grow longer in the spring, we are reminded that the dreary days of winter will soon be over.

As we ponder our Savior's suffering during his Passion we are reminded that the dreary days of our existence in this world of sin will not last forever. When Peter saw that glimpse of Jesus' glory and heard Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah about his suffering for us he said to Jesus, "**Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.**

It's good for us also to be reminded of Jesus' glory and of his suffering for us. We've already called attention to what that suffering means for us. That was a lesson Peter still needed to learn. Once again, Peter fails to comprehend what he has heard Jesus talking about. Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about his departure – the fact that he would go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Peter responds to this event by saying: **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.)** What they had seen and heard had filled them with fear. No doubt, the brilliant appearance of the Lord must have been frightening and yet Peter wishes to build shelters on the mountain for

Jesus, and Moses and Elijah. Peter wanted the glory to last – and so his fears were not from that glory alone. There must have been some fear regarding what awaited them when they would come down from the mountain. But there was no reason for fear. Jesus would be with them. The Father reminded Peter to listen to him: **"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.**

Listen to Jesus – he will remove all of your fears too. One wonders just what those three disciples were thinking as they walked down that mountain. But one doesn't have to wonder what was on Jesus mind. **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.**

As this scene from the mountain draws to a close we are reminded of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus saw through the dreary days of his suffering and death to his final victory. He would overcome death and the devil – and then that would be the time for the disciples to talk about Jesus glory.

Only then would the purpose behind Jesus' innocent life and his innocent suffering and death become clear – until then reports of this account would have only fueled the misplaced hopes that so many had that Jesus would provide for all of their earthly needs by establishing an earthly kingdom.

Jesus' resurrection assures us our resurrection. During the coming 40 days of Lent, our focus will be on his Passion but our hope will ultimately be based on his glorious resurrection. It's good for us to never to lose sight of Jesus' glory, his painful suffering for us and his resurrection. Those are the reminders from the Mountain that we've gained from this account of Jesus' transfiguration. May those reminders go with us now as we go about our day-to-day tasks and as we deal with our daily concerns. Jesus is our glorified and risen Savior. Amen.