

“His Glory Revealed”

Date: March 6, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Matthew 17:1-9

Theme: glory; Lordship of Christ

Occasion: Transfiguration Sunday

The story of the transfiguration of Christ is the biblical equivalent of Friday night at your local movie theater. It is a preview of what is to come - a preview of what it would be for Christ in the resurrection. Jesus' face shines like the sun, Matthew tells us. And his clothes become dazzling white. Jesus is glorified right before the very eyes of Peter, James and John as he communes with Moses and Elijah.

Previews, unfortunately, don't last long by their very nature. If they did, they wouldn't be called previews. They would be full-length movies. But then again, this is one of the Bible's true mountain-top experiences. And as we all know, mountaintop experiences don't last very long.

Every once in a while, a moment comes along that we wish we could freeze for all eternity. It's the kind of experience that reaches down into the marrow of our bones, and touches us with a special feeling. We wish it would last forever, but it doesn't.

At the time of the Transfiguration, Peter finally broke the awkward silence. But the Gospel writers tell us that he fumbled with his words, not really knowing what to say. I suspect that most preachers still feel a bit that way, when we approach this passage of scripture. Most of us feel that when we finally have our say, our words will be as inadequate as were Peter's. But still we try.

There are many different things that we can learn from this unique experience on the mountain. But this morning I only want to focus on one thing. Up there on the mountain top, God revealed the glory of His son, Jesus our Lord, the

anointed One. There, on the mountain, in the presence of the inner circle of disciples, Jesus removed the cloak of his humanity, and the glory of his divinity was revealed.

I think the most important message of the transfiguration, is the revelation from heaven that Jesus is the Son of God. God's presence is symbolized by light. And there on the mountaintop, Jesus is bathed in light so bright that the disciples couldn't look at Him.

Today we have a lot of pretenders, people who want you to think that they are somebody special. For example, as I flick through stations on my television, I sometimes stumble upon these wrestling shows. The actors, I mean the wrestlers, come out onto the stage in a show of light and smoke and great drama. And that's what it is, let's be honest - it's great drama. But as phony as it is, you get the sense that you are beholding greatness. What pretenders!

Now, imagine Jesus taking off his robe of being human, and nothing but God is seen. His majesty is revealed for a few to see. They had to turn away, it was so bright. Glory and majesty and power and honor to our King, Jesus.

Moses and Elijah are there. Moses representing the Law and Elijah the prophets. They give their approval to Jesus, indicating to the disciples that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is the new Moses, who will deliver God's people from the bondage of sin. Jesus is the new Elijah, who demands a more radical obedience to God than the people had been challenged to do before. He Himself shows the Way, by his perfectly obedient life.

A cloud descends upon them. And anyone who is at all familiar with the Old Testament knows that clouds were also a sign of God's presence. From out of the cloud that descended upon them, a supernatural voice declares, "This is my Beloved

Son. Listen to Him.”

This was no ordinary event in the lives of Peter, James and John. There were clouds and supernatural voices. People appearing from the dead. Bright lights that made your eyes hurt. You know, this has all the makings of a great Steven Spielberg movie. If I could give this movie a title, I would call it, “Close Encounters of the Holy Kind.”

The transfiguration is a divine manifestation, by which God revealed that Jesus was unique, holy and divine. He was and He is the Son of God. Amen? Amen! He is the Incarnation of God. It was a miraculous event, accompanied by all of the signs and wonders that declare - Jesus Christ really is the Son of God. Listen to Him.”

Jesus was not merely a nice man, who told nice stories and taught people to like each other. This was God, in the flesh, come to earth for the salvation of a sinful society. God wanted His people to wake up and smell the coffee, and to get with the program, to borrow some worn-out cliches.

God was, and still is trying to get the attention of the world. In the comic strip *Peanuts*, Snoopy’s brother Spike, the one who lives in the desert, is sitting with his back against a cactus, writing a letter that says, “At night the sun goes down and the stars come out. And then, in the morning, the sun comes up again. It’s so exciting to live in the desert.”

Ah! We’ve gotten used to sunrises and sunsets, mornings and evenings, the moon and the stars. We’ve gotten used to music and art, family and friends, joy and sorrow. We too easily grow accustomed to the wonders that surround us. Laziness keeps us from seeing the flashes of glory all around us, every day.

But God is always trying to get our attention. And that was certainly the case

when Jesus was on earth. There on the Mount of Transfiguration, God said, “This is my son, listen to Him. There is transforming power in his life and in his words. Accept him into your hearts by faith, feed upon his words, listen and obey!”

There, on the mountain, God revealed the glory of His son. It was a foretaste of Easter, when Christ would rise victorious from the grave. Christ who was crucified on Friday for the sin of the world, would be raised on Sunday, for the forgiveness and salvation of us all. His glory revealed.

On the mountain, God pulled back the skin of his humanity, and showed us His glory. In Jesus, we see God. There has never been anyone else who has walked closer to God, or known God’s thoughts better than Jesus. He came from Heaven. He showed us the way. He died in our place to atone for our sins. He rose that we might live eternally. His glory revealed.

On Wednesday of this week, the Christian community begins the season of Lent. Some consider it to be the holiest season of the year, as we contemplate what the crucifixion really means. We, like Jesus did, turn our faces toward Jerusalem, knowing that a cross was his final fate. A cruel and ugly way to die. Jesus knew it was coming.

But before he faces the cross, Jesus is allowed to revisit his glory, there on the mount of Transfiguration. And so we know, that the man who died at the hands of his enemies was not a martyr. He was not a victim. Rather, he was the loving God of heaven, who chose to die in our place.

This is the glory of God, that He loved us this much, to be willing to die for us. To this kind of a God, I will give my attention, and my devotion.

On the Mount of Transfiguration - His Glory Revealed. Thanks be to God!
Amen!

