

Transfiguration of Our Lord

February 14, 2021

St. Mark 9:2-9:

“The Glimpse of Things Unseen”

- I. From Sin to Sinless. (perfect body)
- II. Gives Insight.
- III. Never the Thought to Leave.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 N. Oakland Avenue
Decatur Illinois 62526

St. Mark 9:2-9 The Transfiguration

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is, of course, the Sunday of the Transfiguration of our Lord. Since we each carry personal burdens and concerns, I want the following Scripture in front of us as we make our way up the mountain with Jesus, Peter, James, and John:

So we do not lose heart (as we see, that's easy to do with this world). Though our outer self is wasting away (we are decaying and dying - some much sooner than others), our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction (any affliction) is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen (this world cannot be our ultimate focus - it cannot), but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient (here and quickly gone forever), but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

We pray for encouragement as we participate in . . .

THE GLIMPSE OF THINGS UNSEEN

I. From Sin to Sinless. (perfect body)

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. (vv. 2-3)

Well, we know where this is going. Jesus had informed the disciples of His impending suffering, death and resurrection, but the resurrection part didn't register. At the Transfiguration He presents the following: (1) He is God in the flesh ("His clothes became intensely white"), (2) He comes to take the punishment for their sin and ours, every sin, at the Cross. Only God could do this. We're told, "And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." (v. 9) They were walking with God!

Again, "...he was transfigured before them..." They would glimpse His divine nature. But, not only that, they got a glimpse of what they will be and we get a glimpse of what we will be on that glorious day of Resurrection. John, who was present at the Transfiguration, writes, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." (1 Jn. 3:2)

In 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 the Holy Spirit, through Paul that compares our present knowledge of God with what we will have in eternity:

For we know in part and we prophecy (proclaim God's Word) in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am known.

Here we are battling with the sin that is still in us, the reality, as Paul writes and we must confess: "...I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." (Rom 7:18) And don't we cry out with Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24) And our Lord Jesus stands there, **transfigured**, true God and true Man, Who does everything necessary to secure our forgiveness and eternal life! He will lift us to resurrected, glorified bodies. And the sinning will be no more. The following words from our text will direct us to several points:

II. Gives Insight.

And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. (vv. 4-6)

The first point is this: Our text says that the brightness of Christ's appearance along with the appearances of Moses and Elijah caused the three disciples to be terrified. Recall the time when Moses came down the mountain with the Ten Commandments given to Him by the Lord. Scriptures say, "...as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone, because he had been talking with God...and they (the people) were afraid to come near him." (Ex. 34:29-30) The people were looking at a reflection of the glory of God. At the Transfiguration Peter, James and John saw something more with Jesus: They saw the radiance that came from within, a revelation of His divine nature.

Second, there's the fact that the disciples knew Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen before. Dr. Francis Pieper writes, "Besides seeing God as He is, the blessed will also know one another, even though they did not meet in this life... The question whether the blessed will also recognize the damned in hell is left unanswered. If the blessed do know the damned, such recognition will self-evidently not dim their bliss, since their will is in perfect accord with the will of God." (Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III, CPH, Saint Louis, 1953, p. 551)

Third, the appearance of the Divine Christ and the presence of Moses and Elijah destroy any notion that Christianity is a new religion or a spin-off of the Old Testament. It has been noted that the New Testament is "the continuation and fulfillment" of the Old Testament. Commentator Harold Wicke writes: "Christianity began in the Garden of Eden and will reach its marvelous climax on Judgment Day. Those who reject Christ actually reject Moses and Elijah... Moses and Elijah are on the side of Christ." (Harold E. Wicke, Mark, The People's Bible, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 1997, p.127)

III. Never the Thought to Leave.

That brings us to this aspect of *The Glimpse Of Things Unseen*: while the disciples' first reaction to the Transfiguration was fear, there was the reality that they wanted to stay. We recall from our text: "Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.'"

At this juncture, it would be good to recall this powerful vision of Paul:

And I know a man who was...caught up to the third heaven - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up to paradise...and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. ...So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (2 Cor 12:2-4,7)

I'm thinking that most of us wonder what forever and forever, unchanging heaven is going to be like. For some it's a sad disappointment that they won't get to go here or there, do this or that, eat this or that. What if I said that once you get to heaven the importance of all the here's and there's, the this and that's of earth will be of no concern? After all, Paul did say, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." (Phil. 1:23b) And Jesus did say to the one criminal, "...today you will be with me in Paradise." (Lk. 23:43b) A place that is *far better* is...well...just that: far better than anything here. And I can't say that I've seen or experienced anything here that resembles an unending, unchanging *Paradise!* To quote Dr. Pieper again:

Our old theologians, in discussing eternal life, speak justly of [the beatific vision of God: the reward of the blessed in seeing God as He is]. And they are right, too, in adding that the [reward of seeing God as He is] excludes every possibility of defection [deserting] from God. Aside from the fact that in heaven there is no longer any deception, the deceivers having been thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10), the blessed by their beholding of God will enjoy God so perfectly that *eo ipso* [in itself] every yearning after another good is absolutely excluded [I would add, because there is no other or greater good!]. (Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III, p. 551)

Pieper then cites 16th-17th century Lutheran theologian, Johann Gerhard:

“Because the blessed know God, the highest Good, intuitively and perfectly, they also adhere inseparably to this highest Good, perfectly known, through the holy action of their will, and for that reason there will be expelled from their very mind every mist of ignorance and from their will every proclivity [inclination] toward evil...Just as angels, because they always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven (Matt. 18:10), are confirmed in the good and freed from the danger of sinning, so the blessed will be perfectly holy and confirmed in the good through and because of the beatific [the heavenly; the blissful] vision of God.” (Ibid, p. 551)

There will never be a want, much less a thought, to sin. It's wonderful to be at the Mount of Transfiguration! It's *The Glimpse Of Things Unseen* and a wake-up call....to get ready!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott