

*February 7, 2016*

*Luke 9:28-36: **"The Glory of His Exodus"***

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Avenue  
Decatur, Illinois 62526*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is there on top of the high mountain that Jesus is transfigured. We are told that "His face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white." Not only are we to understand by this event that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and the perfect and pleasing sacrifice for our sins, but we are also to understand that his very flesh - our substance - is glorified. In other words, the one who shares our humanity is changed. We are also led to see that Moses and Elijah are talking with him. Both have been "dead" for hundreds of years. Luke describes it in this way: "Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor . . . they spoke about his departure [exodus], which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem."

I want you to concentrate on the fact that Moses and Elijah also appeared in "glorious splendor." Of course, they were not equal to Christ nor should they be considered gods, but they did and are, to this day, participating in the divine nature - in the glory of the Lord. In other words, they were and continue to benefit from the person and work of Jesus Christ. Their transfiguration is entirely dependent upon the glory of the Son of God who accomplished all things in human flesh.

When we think about the glory of the Lord, the truth is that it is such a large topic that it would be impossible to condense the whole thing into a 15 to 20 minute sermon. Still, there are a few things we can say that will be helpful. To begin with, the concept of the glow of the Lord is so broad that it sums up all the perfections of his very essence. What that means is this: His glory is who he is, all the time, without beginning and end, in every way, all at once. We have to break it down in definable parts because we live in time and space. All that God does, in his plans, his mind, his thoughts, in his counsel of salvation and the execution of every detail in creation is so glorious and so absolutely exalted and transcendent that no finite (limited and bound) creature can presently, fully behold and comprehend him.

We see this truth illustrated in Moses. We know from Exodus 24 that when Moses was living on the earth, he beheld a special manifestation of the glory of God on the Mountain of Sinai. He saw the glory of the Lord, if I may say, on a dimmer switch. In Exodus 33:11 it says that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Regardless of this truth, Moses says in verse eighteen of the same thirty-third chapter of Exodus, "Please show me your glory."

You see, what Moses had come to know of the Lord and his ways was through words and figures that did not fully satisfy him (again, a dimmer switch). Moses wanted to see the innermost recesses of God's heart - all his glory. But, the Lord says to him: "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." Then, the Lord goes on to declare: "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'the Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." The Lord then says, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

In the New Testament, it is written in John 1:18 that “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.” The best that we can know of the glory of God in this life is to behold the person and work of his one and only Son Jesus Christ. He is the image of the Father, God of very God, the Word of the Father. The Word became one of us and lived a perfect life on our behalf, suffered and died for the sins of the world. Now, there is a moment in the ministry of Jesus where Philip says to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Sounds a lot like Moses when he said, “Please show me your glory” doesn't it? The desire of every child of God is to forever behold and receive the living God and to share in eternal love and bliss forever!

How does Jesus answer Philip? Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves (John 14:8-11).”

Like Moses, Philip is to see God on a dimmer switch. It is through the person and work of Jesus that we are to see all that we can see until we move from this mortal world into immortality. In our day, we meet Jesus in the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But, the destination is always before us. In the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” And in the words of 1 John 3:2, “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. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).”

What will it be like to see God as he is? And that brings us to the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. The best that we can answer the question - “What will it be like to see God's glory?” - is by considering what happens when Peter, James, and John see it (again, on a dimmer switch). We are told in our Gospel lesson, “And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.” Let's put it this way, the glow of Jesus was so wonderful - and the glow that Jesus was giving to Moses and Elijah was so wonderful, that from Peter's point of view, he was ready to keep it on earth. Of course, this was impossible. Other than this, what the vision of God will be like will only be fully known when we get to it.

Still, it is something that all of us should long for. Think of it in this way: If it was enough for Peter to stay on the mountain and be fine with it, then how great it will be! Can you imagine being permeated and penetrated by the pure love of the one who is uncreated? It is truly inexpressible in this lifetime, but it is truly the focus of our destination. We typically think of it in these beautiful words of the loud voice from the throne in the book of Revelation, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).” It is with that in mind that we can firmly say and believe that all things down here

are not worth comparing to that which awaits us in heaven! We truly are aliens and strangers down here. Heaven is our home! God is our home! And when you have God, you have everything!

And what will we be like? The appearance of Elijah is especially worthy of notation. If you know the account of Elijah, you will know that when he departed, he bodily left this world and went into heaven. It says in 2 Kings 2:11, “suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared . . . and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” The only thing that was left, we are told, was the cloak that had fallen from Elijah.

Now for those of you that remember your Old Testament history, Elijah did not have an easy journey down here. Yet, we see him on the mount of transfiguration with the Lord. He bodily appears and is in glory speaking about an eternal subject that we will never grow tired of talking about - the exodus of Christ and ultimately our exodus - the departure from our bondage and slavery to sin, death, and the devil. The appearance of Moses and Elijah in glory really ratifies everything that Christ would do and proclaims that it was already as good as done. In other words, we see here that nothing could prevent our Lord from success. Our change is real and it is coming in its completion in due time. As we see it with Elijah, so are we to understand that we will be like Jesus. We will be like Jesus because he gives himself to us. His transformation is ours, and that means that death and hell will have no hold on us!

In our Gospel lesson for this morning it says that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were talking about Jesus' departure - his exodus. Only the Gospel of Luke uses that term to refer to the death and ascension of Jesus Christ. It is therefore, most appropriate that Moses and Elijah are talking to him, for each of them departed from this world in interesting ways. Moses dies and is buried by God and Elijah ascends into heaven. Both are involved in the glow of the Lord. Their departure not only tells us about the exodus of Jesus, but it also tells us about our own departure/exodus from this world. This is the glory of His exodus! And his glory is ours!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott