

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

It's hard to miss when God is on a mountain. God loves revealing his glory on top of a high place. When you scan the pages of the history of God and his interactions with people, it's so often that he unwraps the glory that he is on top of a mountain. He does so as he appears to Moses in a burning bush, when he gives the ten commandments and the law, both on a mountain. God appears on Mount Carmel in front of the prophets of Baal and Elijah, and again on a different mountain in the whisper, after he parades before him the fire and earthquake.

Our text contains another example of undeniable glory revealed on a mountaintop. Recorded in all three synoptic Gospels, Jesus brings 3 disciples: Peter, James and John up on an unspecified mountain, and there he shows them a glorious sight they couldn't miss. **As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.**

It is here that Jesus is transfigured, which means His Godly glory bursts out of His humanity. And for a few minutes His disciples bask in something Jesus usually kept carefully hidden. His glory which is like a flash of lightning that emanates from himself, purely because of his divinity. His clothes whiter than humanly possible, his face shining like the sun. But that's not all, there appears saints of old whom the disciples had heard about who God appeared to in days gone by, on a mountains, the ones we mentioned earlier. Jesus appears with Moses, the great lawgiver, the one who knew the Lord face to face. One who saw a glimpse of the Lord's glory on a mountain and his face glowed when he returned below. Elijah was there. One of the great prophets of the Old Testament, who was carried to heaven with the fiery chariot and whirlwind. To top it all off, they are enveloped in a cloud and **"A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."**

There really is only one way to describe being around this glory. In the words of Peter: **"Master, it is good for us to be here."** No arguing with that! Everything about this is good. Here these disciples see Jesus for who he is, he is God who's glory, even masked is too magnificent to contain. Here are two of the heroes of faith, here, speaking with Jesus. Here was the voice of God the Father giving the words of approval upon his own son, and demanding that his words be listened to. It's no wonder that Peter sees this and says: **"Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"**. It is good. Let's stay here. We don't have to go. The glory of God was apparent on that mount of transfiguration. You couldn't miss it.

But the mountain lasts only for a short while: **"When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone."** You would think it would be hard to forget the glory on that mountain. But in it was almost impossible to remember that glory. **"They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem."** Those

clothes white as lightning, soon enough tattered or even just taken away. Jesus face hard to look at because it was more than human, soon hard to look at because it appeared less than human. Jesus surrounded by heroes of faith, now winged by two criminals sentenced to die. His glory revealed to a few, now his humiliation on display for everyone to see. Those disciples who said it is good for us to be here with you, denying their associations or fleeing away in the night. The voice of the Father coming down to proclaim: "This is my son, whom I have chosen", to Jesus crying out: "Why have you forsaken me?" To no answer.

Those words of Peter, with the view of what comes below, seem extra truthful: **"It is good for us to be here"**. Here on the mountain, with approval, safety, glory, companionship. Why is it that there is that interesting little phrase then? **"He did not know what he was saying"**.

It's something so important to understand: There is Glory down below. God's glory is shown on the mountain, God's glory is proven down the mountain. It is good to be here on top, it is good down below. How? It's because that is what Jesus came to do.

"They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." While we may wish it to be so, the glory of heaven cannot be brought down to earth in this world of sin. God must cleanse the world of sin to bring us to the glory of heaven. Jesus didn't suffer so that he would be pitied. He suffered so that we could enjoy the glory that Moses and Elijah enjoyed as they spoke with Jesus on the mountain.

Peter wasn't wrong, only shortsighted. Peter was thinking, this is as good as it gets, here. But what he didn't grasp is that it is not as good as it gets, ever. To be sure the Transfiguration was a great moment, but an incomparably greater moment is Easter. Seeing Moses and Elijah was glorious, but even more glorious would be when Peter, James, and John would possess themselves the glory that now, they only saw.

However, in between the great triumph of Transfiguration and the greater triumph of Easter was an abyss of pain named Good Friday. It is there we see God's glory proved. While it might not seem that way, it is good for us to be there too. There We see our sins laid on God himself. There we see his love displayed in the glory he laid aside for us. Jesus left the mountain and left the glory, because you and I need saving. Jesus left the mountain and left the glory, so that one day He can take you to heaven.

It's quite difficult to craftily preach a specific application of coming down from the mountain glory in the road to the greater glory. But it isn't especially needed, as the application is the truth of the text as a whole.

God does show his glory on the mountains. He does show things that are impossible to comprehend on this earth. But that is not the glory that can be brought to us here forever. Nor is it the glory that we should seek. The glory Jesus comes to bring comes after he goes down the mountain. The glory that God came to win, the triumph he has comes through the time when that glory was the hardest to see. The true glory was not shown to Moses and Elijah on an earthly mountain, it was when they were taken to true glory in heaven with our God. The true glory for those disciples was not staying with transfigured Jesus on earth, but being with the unshielded glory of Jesus in heaven.

Brothers and sisters, go with him down the mountain, and see that. It will soon be time to go down the mount of transfiguration, where his glory is so apparent, to Jerusalem where the glory seems gone. But it is good for us to be there. It is good for us to see a Jesus who is both shining and also scarred, bright but also bruised, approved and abandoned. Because there we see where our true glory lies. Our glory lies in God made flesh. It lies in Jesus, true God who suffered and paid for my sins. It lies in Jesus, who laid aside his crown so we have the crown of heaven.

It's hard to miss God's glory revealed on a mountaintop, don't miss God's glory revealed down below. For us, it will soon be time to leave the Triumph of Transfiguration and embrace the Pain of the Passion but as the hymn verse so eloquently reminds us: *But you, Lord, do not stay. With mercy resolute, you leave this glorious hill to die—our perfect substitute. Amen.*