

Prayer of the Day:

Lord God, before the suffering and death of your one and only Son, you revealed his glory on the holy mountain. Grant that we who bear his cross on earth may behold by faith the light of his heavenly glory and so be changed into his likeness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. A voice came from the cloud: "this is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him." Alleluia. (Mark 9:7b cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Ever notice the rather wide set of opinions that exist in the world when it comes to the things you need. Talk to your financial advisor and you'll hear all the percentages for the various points in your life that need to be hit in order to achieve financial freedom. "You need to have "X" amount in "X" number of years or you're in trouble." Talk to the doctor and they will have the list to make sure that you achieve and maintain good health in this world. "You need to eat right, exercise, avoid "X", and add more "Y", or you're in trouble." Are you a parent? Better not mess up your kids. What they need is less TV or they will be lazy but not too little or they will be out of touch, make sure you buy all the right brain toys and have them in all the right programs, or someday they will blame you for all their shortcomings.

Is it any wonder that when it comes to church, which is to say our time with God, we often do the same. We imagine that there are marks to hit and not just for us but for our God as well. We become consumers and forget that we are beggars. With all that in mind, we turn our attention to the Transfiguration of Jesus this evening/morning and what we find is that our all-knowing God already has it all figured out. **God A Hidden Glory Is Exactly What We Need.**

As we dig into our lesson, perhaps it is best to first look through the eyes of Peter. His reaction is much like I would expect my own to be. I just want everything to work out. I want everyone to see and acknowledge Jesus as He is, as I know Him to be. But Jesus, well Jesus doesn't always cooperate. For Peter, He is constantly pulling the attention away from His power and might, always pointing to humility, even death, telling people to keep the really impressive stuff quiet. The guy almost seems to get in His own way. He could be so much more popular. Peter will even take Jesus aside later on and in effect tell Him what He really needs and it certainly is not a cross.

I've been there. Truth be told I'm there right now. I mean for real right. It seems like the pandemic is maybe headed in the right direction and now war in Europe? Do we really need to repeat everything that happened in the early 1900's. Come on God! I don't need higher gas prices and further disruption to supply chains. What we really need is ...

Ah, but then we come to the mountain of transfiguration and here for a brief moment in time, everything seems to head in the right direction. Peter cries out what I've always thought myself, "*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.*" This Lord, Yes this, the glory and the divinity, the power and the glory, this is what we need what we crave. More of this. This is what we really need in the world today.

Of course, there is much to learn from this sight on the mountain top. Jesus is the Son of God. He is everything the angels announced at Christmas. This is God in the flesh. God among us. But notice something here. Immediately after Peter blurts out his desire the Holy Scripture inserts some commentary. Luke says Peter

Luke 9:28-36

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, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) ³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

was so overwhelmed *He did not know what to say*. Mark adds that the disciples *were so frightened*. You see this is always what happens when we stand in the presence of the holy God. Remember the angels and the curious greeting they are regularly forced to present. Don't be afraid is the refrain again and again in God's Word and for good reason. As we stand in the presence of perfection we immediately understand what we are lacking. While I have always craved the divinity and the glory of God, even His angels remind me that I don't deserve to stand in the presence of perfection.

While I like to believe I have it all figured out and know exactly what I need. Well, remember Isaiah, as He stood before the Lord with seraphim all-around a few weeks ago? Only one thought captivates him in the presence of that glory, *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty"* (Isaiah 6:5). Turns out, while I often want to dwell in the glory of God, basking in His power with His law ruling and reigning over all things. Well, the Law kills as it shows our sin. God's power frightens when I truly behold it and think of what it could do to me. God's glory is simply too much for sinners to take in. While it is the vision I have always wanted, The one I thought I really needed, it leaves me terrified and befuddled.

So God does something else, equally amazing for you. After the impressive scene, *When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone*. Poof, just like that all is gone and it's just Jesus, no longer gleaming white and bright like lightning before them. The glory is veiled. It has to be. Who in their right mind would crucify such a one as had just been revealed to them? Of course, that is exactly what must be done to save sinful human beings.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God as the mount has clearly shone, now sets His face for Jerusalem. Now He makes His way with singular focus to the events which will end in His death and resurrection. The season of Lent will highlight all of it. The heart-wrenching betrayal of Judas, the brutality of the guards (Isrealite and Roman), the injustice of one court of law after another, and after He is pulverized by Roman scourges, the cross.

This, dear friends, is not a pretty scene. In fact, it is gruesome and grotesque. It is hard to watch and recall. But it is absolutely needed. Here my sin is paid for in full. Here the sin of the entire world is paid for. Every complaint when God's will didn't match my own. Every arrogant announcement that my ways were better than His. For the times like Peter when I foolishly wanted to live in the very thing that was terrifying me instead of dwelling in a fallen world with God's Word as my light. For all of it, the cross that God might forgive every sin and see me as He has always wanted me. Clothed in Christ's righteousness, we are saints. Made so not by the work of our hands but by the blood which dripped from His. No wonder the Father's voice booms from heaven in the cloud just before they see Jesus, glory veiled once more, *"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

This is God's great advice then for us as we live in a fallen world. As sin swirls behind and in front of our eyes. Listen to Jesus. Listen to the Word. Dwell within it. Why? Because there we see Him again and again. There we are reminded of the precious truths which announce sinners to be saints, that would remind us of our God, who took on flesh that we might live with Him forever.

Maybe it's that voice of the Father in the transfiguration that so wonderfully summarizes what Luther was saying in his explanation to the the third article of the Apostles Creed. "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true." Second article forgiveness, third article faith it allows me to stand someday in the glory I so often crave forever with God in heaven.

One day, one day I will get what I have always wanted, we will see the glory, either when we close our eyes in death or when Jesus returns should the end come before it. One day sickness, war, and the wretched consequences of sin will be gone forever, never to return. Until then, God would have us dwell in **A Hidden Glory** which is **Is Exactly What We Need**. Hidden in Flesh for our Salvation. Hidden in the Word that we might believe. Amen.