**Rise, Have No Fear!**

**Matthew 17:1-9**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the garden of Eden, shortly after they had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve had heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and hid, but the Lord God called to them, “Where are you?” Do you remember Adam’s response? He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (Gen. 3:10)

As we heard in the Old Testament reading, as Moses came down from meeting with God, the people of Israel were afraid to come near him. Why? Because His face shone, it had somehow absorbed some of the glory of God, and as you remember from two weeks ago, it was the glory of God’s backside, for Moses had not seen God’s face.

As I said then, I ask again, at how many instances were people afraid to be in Jesus’ presence after Jesus’ showed forth His divine power in a miraculous way? It happened when He walked on the water to His disciples in the boat, when He calmed the storm, and at other times.

Why are people afraid, why are they terrified at the voice or presence of God? When there is no doubt that the glory of God is present, why are people terrified?

The last conversation which Matthew records the disciples having had with Jesus in his Gospel, happened six days before the events of our text. Jesus had asked the disciples who they thought He was. Peter had made the bold confession that Jesus was the Christ. And Jesus replied that indeed He was, and that only the Father could have revealed this truth to Peter. On that day He proclaimed that He would give them authority to loose and retain sins.

From that day, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and on the third day rise. You remember the first time Jesus told them this? Peter boldly told Jesus that such would never be the case. Peter’s boldness only earned him Jesus’ rebuke.

Matthew’s last recorded words from Jesus before His transfiguration were, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16:24‑28)

Up on that mountaintop, were these conversations and words of Jesus on the hearts and minds of Peter, James, and John? Most likely! With those thoughts in their minds, we come the events of our text.

Jesus is transfigured, the glorious radiance of God was shone forth in the person of Jesus. Then Moses and Elijah appeared there, talking with Jesus. Luke’s Gospel explains that they talked about His departure which was going to take place in Jerusalem. They heard Jesus speak with the lawgiver, Moses, and the Old Testament’s greatest prophet, Elijah. He spoke about His fulfilling both the law and the prophets with His coming suffering and death.

Concluding the conversation, the bright cloud overshadowed them and the voice of the Father spoke, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Peter, James, and John fell on their faces, terrified. Imagine Peter’s thoughts, “Jesus had told us he was going to suffer and die and I rebuked Him. Oh, woe is me.” All three had thought that taking up a cross and following Jesus does not sound all that fun. We all would like to join the glory of God, but we do not want to bear any crosses.

These three disciples were terrified that day, for they knew that they were sinners. They knew their thoughts were on earthly glory, hoping not to bear a cross. Their thoughts were not God’s thoughts. They desired more than they knew they deserved. So when the voice spoke the Law, symbolized by the presence of Moses standing right before their very eyes, that Law became only too real.

Adam in the garden knew his sin and was afraid. The Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai knew of their grumbling sinfulness against God and were afraid. The disciples on the mountain of Transfiguration knew their sinfulness and were afraid.

All of them knew their sinfulness and were afraid – and rightly so. When confronted by the presence of the divine glory of the perfect and holy God, there is fear and terror in all who know instinctively, that the wages of sinfulness is death and the wrath of God. We cower in fear because we know that we deserve the wrath of God for our whining and sniveling, for our lack of trust in Him.

Dearly beloved disciples, the chosen of God – did you hear the words spoken by the Father in the bright cloud? Did you hear what He said? He declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." Listen to Him! Listen to Him!!

What was it that Jesus then proclaimed to the three sinners cowering on their knees and faces terrified? He said, "Rise, and have no fear."

It was as if He were saying to them, “Were you not paying attention My dearest friends, My disciples? I told you that I was going to Jerusalem. That I was going to suffer many things at the hands of the chief priests and scribes. Do you not understand that I am going to die and on the third day be raised again? Did you not understand that I was talking with Moses and Elijah because all that has been said and done before this time, points to what will take place in Jerusalem? Do you not understand that everything I am going to accomplish is to be done in order to remove this terror and fear which your own sin brings to the core of your very heart? My Father wants you to listen to what I say, for what I say brings comfort and peace to you, it removes fear and dread.”

You and I would like to work out our own salvation by our own works. We want to think that what we do is not all that bad, that we stand in God’s good graces because we are, at the heart of it, decent people. But in those moments we are most honest with ourselves we know our sinfulness. Our deep dark secrets sins loom large. So, acknowledging them, we to fall on our knees in fear and trembling. We are nothing but poor, miserable sinners, unworthy to stand in the presence of a holy God.

Jesus proclaims to you, “Rise, and have no fear.”

At the font, baptismal water is joined to Christ’s proclamation to baptize “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Mt. 28:19) As Peter later declares, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:38) It is why Lindsey and Ryan brought Calvin to the font today. It is as if we are there on that Transfiguration Mount so that Calvin might hear Jesus proclaim to him in water and word, “Rise, and have no fear!”

In years past, the confession of sins was always done on bended knees with head bowed in humble submission. Kneeling is the physical posture of repentance. Even without falling to physical knees, we come with hearts bowed down before God. We do so, and are privileged to hear the Word of absolution Christ commands to be spoken. The Father commands we are to listen to the beloved Son. Jesus declares of His ministers, “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” (Lk 10:16) So Jesus speaks to us by the mouth of His ministers. We hear the Word of the beloved Son proclaim our sins forgiven. It is as if we are there on the mountain, on our faces in terror, and Jesus proclaims to you, “Rise, and have no fear.”

We come to the Table of our Lord today, we do so approaching Jesus on bended knee. At the Table, we kneel acknowledging the presence of God coming to us in the word of the sacrament. We remember the Father’s command to listen to the words of the beloved Son. Hear the beloved Son speak to you – “take eat, this is my body... take drink, this cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” In obedience to Christ’s command to eat and drink, it is as if Jesus proclaims to you, “Rise, and have no fear.”

When the disciples went down from the mountain, the glory had faded. Jesus looked to them as He had looked before. He looked like a man, like the carpenter’s son, maybe a great prophet, but He was the Christ of God. In faith these three saw Him as He was on that mountain, the beloved Son of the Father to whom they were to listen.

Today, we are on that mountain of transfiguration as the Holy Spirit is at work in the Word you are hearing. By faith, see the glory of the very Son of God hidden in the guise of water, word, bread, and wine. You are cleansed of our sin, for that is the word that the Father commanded we are to hear from His beloved Son, so hear it. Jesus proclaims to you that you are forgiven unto life everlasting, “Rise, and have no fear.” In the name of Jesus. Amen.