**Your Transfiguration**

**Matthew 17:1-9**

*Transfiguration of Our Lord*

*1.24.2021*

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

Can you imagine seeing a bush that is burning, but not being consumed by the fire? Curiosity is not just a characteristic of ‘the cat.’ So, you approach it to get a closer look. As you draw near, a voice, coming from the bush, speaks to you, giving you instructions, “Do not come near; Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” How would you respond?

Moses hid his face for a voice was coming out of a burning bush. What is this voice? Who could possibly speak from a burning bush? Considering what this voice says, “Do not come near; Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground,” this Voice could only come from God. Our Old Testament lesson says that *Moses hid His face,* *for he was afraid to look at God*.

Have we lost that? Have we lost that “fear of the Lord?” I know we are often taught that in regard to God, ***“fear”*** of the Lord is *reverence, awe, and respect*. Should we seriously remove the idea of *FEAR* from “fear”? When a child is “afraid” of the dark, does it mean they have “reverence, awe, and respect” of the dark? When someone is “afraid” of heights, does it mean they have “reverence, awe, and respect” of high places?

I would posit before you, that in both those cases, those who are afraid are not exhibiting “reverence, awe, and respect,” they are downright terrified. They are scared.

Moses was **afraid** that day on Mount Horeb. He hid his face. He may indeed have had awe, reverence, and respect – but he was also **scared**, terrified!

Jesus calmed the storm and the disciples fell on their faces **afraid**. He walked on the water and they were **afraid**. In numerous instances, when Jesus exhibits Divine power, we see disciples and others ***terrified*** and often fell on their faces. They are scared, cowering in fear. The shepherds were **terrified** when the angels appeared, and also fell on their faces.

Today, on a high mountain, James, John, and Peter are alone with Jesus in our Gospel lesson. Jesus is transfigured – His divine glory and majesty peaks through the human guise He’s wearing – and then Moses and Elijah also appear. At this, the three are thinking, “Wow! This is cool!” Peter knows something unusual is taking place, but he does not completely get it, which is why he suggests that they build three tents so that they can stay up on the mountain for a while. That is not to be though.

Suddenly, a bright cloud envelopes them. This is something unusual, not a normal cloud, not just some reflective light, this is something incredibly different. As if that were not enough, a voice then speaks from the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”

That is too much for these poor men. They hear this voice. They know it is God speaking! They fall on their faces absolutely terrified!

Why such fear before God that they would fall on their faces? Why would Moses hide his face? Because no man may see God and live! Why can no man see God and live? Sin! Yes, it is that plain and simple – sin. They rightly understood that sinners before God must bow a repentant knee. They must prostrate themselves in sheer terror – hoping only for God’s mercy.

Where is our fear today? Why do we have such a problem with being repentant, kneeling before God in reverence? Consider how we treat God’s holy house? How many churches make God’s house into a three-ring circus, the chancel becoming a stage, and fear of the Lord – even reverence, respect, and awe – thrown out the window?

Why are there some who are disgusted when asked to kneel to confess sins, or even when the pastor does so, complaining, “I don’t bow to anybody or anything?”

Do people have a problem admitting our sinfulness before God? He already knows all our sins even those we do not remember, or may not be aware, we committed. Those gathered together in this place, know their own similar condition. We are in the same boat as Moses, the shepherds on the Judean hillside, and all the disciples.

Even more important than God’s knowledge of our sinfulness, is His intention to take care of it. As we acknowledge our sinful condition, He’s there to take care of it. He has the whole thing under control.

The Father speaks from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

And what does Jesus say to those three repentant sinners with Him on the mountain of Transfiguration? “Rise, and have no fear.”

Jesus is telling them, “You rightly know those sins which cause you to tremble in repentance, craving the mercy of God? Your confessional prayer has been heard. My Father has sent Me, and you have seen a glimpse of My divine glory. He has sent Me for a task, to pay for your sins, to show you mercy.”

“I have just been talking with Moses and Elijah about what I must soon endure for your sakes. Others will now seek excuses to kill Me. One of My own disciples will betray Me into their hands. They have a sham trial and find Me guilty, giving them the excuse to bring Me before Pilate who will spinelessly choose to accede to the demands of these evil men. Pilate will claim to be guiltless, having Me beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns, and then crucified.”

“I will die upon the cross. I will die to pay for your sins. I will be buried. But death will not be able to contain Me, it has no power over me, for I am without sin. I will be raised to life. The death I die, will pay the penalty justly demanded by My Father for your sinfulness and the sinfulness of all mankind.”

Today, **you** come before your God. In His holy house, you have bent your heart’s knee before Him in holy and repentant fear and reverence, begging His forgiveness. And the Father speaks to you, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”

And so, by the Father’s command, the Son speaks to you, "Rise, and have no fear. Hear the word of forgiveness I have commanded My servant to speak in My stead. Your sin is forgiven, and you are raised from your death in sin to new life.”

Again the Son speaks to you as you kneel at His table, repentantly coming to eat of His body pierced for you, and to drink of the blood that He lovingly shed for you. After eating and drinking, He speaks, "My true body and true blood strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Rise, and have no fear. Go in peace.”

Dearly beloved of God, death has been overcome. Jesus would have you rise and have no fear! Instead of death, new life is yours – now and forevermore. In the name of Jesus. Amen.