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Transfiguration Sunday
February 15, 2026
Text: Matthew 17:1 – 9
Title: From the Glory of Transfiguration to the Glory of the Cross (based on CPR outline)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In today's Old Testament Reading Moses, Aaron, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, get to eat with God. After that meal of fellowship, Moses and Joshua then travel up to the top of the mountain where in a similar experience to the Transfiguration, they are covered in the cloud of the Lord's glory. It was at that point that Moses received the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments which God Himself had written out. This was also when God gives Moses the instructions for how the people are to worship Him. It is stunning to think that in today's Gospel account of the Transfiguration of Jesus, Moses has to travel to earth to meet with God, and to speak with his Lord Jesus when before, God came down to earth to meet with him!

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an astonishing account with a lot of moving parts in just nine verses. First and foremost, there is Jesus, who is radiating with incredible Divine Glory. There are also Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about His coming crucifixion. There is the cloud of God's glory that surrounds them, and they hear the voice of God from heaven. There are treasures in each and every one of these things that the Holy Spirit has put before us in God's Word today. But for now, we'll look at how it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and from that we can see how Jesus was comforting them for the tribulation that was coming because the Glory of the Transfiguration is a preface to the Glory of the Cross.

Back in the Garden of Eden, we know that Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, and on that day they surely died just like God said they would. From that moment on, they were sinners. From that moment on, they were afraid of God. They were angry with each other,

and they were corrupt and ashamed. God found them trying to hide from Him in the bushes with fig leaves for clothes and with the devil by their side. And from that moment on, God promised them His own death. As He told them of the curse that they would live under for the rest of their days, God also promised that the Seed of the woman would ultimately crush the devil, and that the devil would also strike Him.

Then God clothed Adam and Eve with the skin of the first sacrifice, and He removed them from the garden. The Lord then did something very significant: “He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24). The Lord stationed an angel guardian to keep Adam and Eve and all of their descendants from going back to the Tree of Life. He knew it would be dangerous for them to eat from that tree. It would have meant that they would then live in their sin forever. It would have meant that they would have ultimately settled for the corrupted glory of Eden rather than to receive the glory that would come from the suffering of the Cross.

That’s really what Peter was quite willing to settle for when he offered to set up shelters for them as they were on the Mount of Transfiguration in verse 4. It’s wonderful that instead Adam and Eve ultimately do get back to the tree of life, who is Jesus, and we and Peter do too. Because Jesus suffered and died for us, we get a glory that is far better than staying on the mountain. We get a glory given to us directly from God. In the very last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22:2, John sees “on either side of the river, the Tree of Life.” Because of Christ we come to that tree forgiven, and we come with the radiance of God’s glory.

Since the time of the Reformation over 500 years ago, this Festival of Transfiguration has marked the end of the season after the Day of Epiphany. Jesus is on the Mountain, and the glory of His Divine Nature radiates through His human flesh. Of all of the manifestations of His glory,

this is the chief and most obvious one, but even here, when Jesus is surrounded by the cloud of light and when He is in the council of Moses and Elijah, His cross is in full view. Lent is around the corner, and Jesus, the God-man, is the Suffering Servant that was prophesied by Isaiah hundreds of years before. In each of the four Gospels, the Transfiguration marks the point where Christ begins His last journey to Jerusalem for His Passion. From the height of this Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus has a clear view of Calvary, and a clear view of His goal, the Cross.

The disciples, however, have a different view of things. They want to build tents to remain in the glory of the moment. They would miss the glory that will eventually come from the cross and remain here in the veiled glory of the moment. The disciples are actually sleeping when His glory first appears, and they are awakened by the transfiguration itself. Their eyes open to see Jesus in His glory, and they hear the conversation that He is having with Moses and Elijah about His coming trip to Jerusalem and His impending death. They hear it, but they don't *listen* to it. Instead, they are caught up in the incredible vision before them, and their desire to have it continue. Peter especially wanted to stay right there on the mountain because he is the one who offers to put up three shelters so that Moses and Elijah can stay there. He wants to capture the glory, and have it remain.

And we have the temptation to be just like Peter. We like the glory of God. We want to revel in it. We want to see and to know the strength and the power of God, especially when we think it will make things better for us. We like seeing the shining Jesus instead of the Jesus that we are shown in the Gospels. This desire is most often on display in us when we find ourselves asking a question that begins with the words, "Why didn't God...?" Why didn't God stop the flood? Why didn't God heal my dad? Why didn't God rescue the child? Why didn't God protect us from the thieves that broke into our home? Why didn't God stop the ones who

murdered His faithful people? You can fill in the end of that question with just about anything, but the idea is still the same. We want to see God's power and strength on full display for our greatest benefit. That's what we want to see, but what we need to see is the bleeding, suffering Jesus so that we can be saved. His suffering must come first, and then His glory, just like Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection in Luke 24:26, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" When it comes to God's Holiness, we need the forgiveness of our sins before we can be made ready to live in God's glory.

You can see that in the reaction of the disciples when they hear the Father's voice rebuking Peter, they fall on their faces in terror! That's what the glory of God will do to you without the cross! Peter had his own idea of the way that things should be, but the voice from the cloud tells him to "Listen to Jesus" instead. *Listen* to what Jesus had told them just the other day after Peter had proclaimed Him to be "The Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Peter was rebuked on that day too, when he tried to tell Jesus that He was wrong about the Christ going, "...to Jerusalem [to] suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." This voice of God suddenly puts these three disciples into their right minds, which is to be afraid of the Lord's Holy Glory, and to realize that they need more than the glory of Jesus revealed to them that day on the Mount! They suddenly know that this Glory will not save them, and it won't save us either.

As much as we might wish for the glory and power of Jesus, we could never stand with a God like that. We have far too many sins to even entertain the idea, and all it takes is for one *single* sin to separate us from God and condemn us. There are too many ways that we've fallen flat on our faces when we try to be good enough to be in His presence, and they all stem and flow from that deepest desire of our sinful nature to be like God. All of our sin from taking His

name in vain to murdering and lust within our heads and hearts to actually doing things to break His Commandments is what makes us rightfully fall on our faces in terror before our Holy God.

But just as suddenly as His glory appeared, Jesus is standing there alone with His disciples again. He reaches out. He touches them, and He commands them to stand up and not be afraid. In a single moment, all of the glory is gone. Moses and Elijah are gone. The cloud has disappeared, and the face of Jesus is no longer shining bright. And all of this has disappeared for the comfort of these disciples who were so afraid. It is Jesus there once again in His humble and human state that comforted them, and it is that Jesus who saves and comforts us.

From that moment on, Jesus sets His face to go to Jerusalem. He knows what awaits Him there, and He knows that that is where His true glory will be revealed in His death and in His resurrection. In the glory of the Transfiguration, Jesus shows us who He is, the One True God in our flesh. In that moment, we see His power. But the terrible humiliation of the cross is where we see His true glory! It is there that our sins are paid for by His sacrifice. It is there that He is our Savior! When He is lifted up on that cross, we see the depth and the greatness of His love for us! In His saving work we can look forward to sharing in His glory, for His great love in the cross has purified us from the sin that should so rightfully terrorize us before God.

We might think of the Transfiguration as the “high point” of Jesus’ ministry, but it is only a vantage point from which Jesus can see clearly where he is going. From the height of that Mount, Jesus sees Jerusalem. From the glory of His Transfiguration, He sees the humiliation of His death on the Cross. And from the splendor of the Transfiguration, Jesus sees the sorrow and pain to come, and through that He sees you, your forgiveness, and your salvation. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.