

Sermon for the Transfiguration of Our Lord March 2, 2025 jj
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Lord, it is good for us to be here! Yes, Peter, that part is correct! It is good for you, and your fellow disciples James and John to be on this Mountain, this connecting-point that's been so designated between God and man. Just not for the reasons you may be thinking about. He gets it wrong, but he doesn't get it all wrong. Peter was going off of the clues he was observing on this magnificent occasion, which the Bible calls the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

The first thing Peter saw was the bright, brilliant light. Only God, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, creator of light itself, could shine with such blazing beauty. Prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel wrote of being nearly blinded by the radiance of God's unbridled glory. They were keenly aware of their total unworthiness to stand in the Lord's presence as sinners. Jesus' clothes were white and clean, their spiritual garb on the other hand was stained and soiled with sin. Peter knew this to be just as true for himself and his two former fishing partners. In the face of the just and holy God, Peter had deserved to die, yet because of God's infinite mercy, he was allowed to live and he was welcomed to the mountain of the Lord's glorious dwelling place. Lord, it is good for us to be here!

Then Peter looked and saw Moses standing there. How did he know it was Moses? How could a man who had no photograph to look at, no artist's rendering, no head-to-foot physical description laid out in the book of Exodus, be recognized now in his new form? For Moses died and his body was buried on the edge of the Promised Land, as we just read in the book of Deuteronomy, yet here he is, able to be seen, apparently given his new, resurrected body like unto the renewed, glorified body that you will receive too on the Last Day of Christ's return.

Moses talked to God on the mountain. The first time he did was on Mount Sinai. Moses saw the bush that burned, but was not burned up, and God spoke to him and sent him to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt and head to the Promised Land. The next appearance of God on Mount Sinai was full of fear, full of the threats of death and destruction if anyone broke God's Commandments. Yet the mountain was full of promises, too, especially the promise of a Savior who would be the greater prophet than Moses, who would speak God's Word directly from His own mouth. Mount Sinai also was the place where men were invited to climb up and behold God, and have a festival meal with Him, and learn of the plans for the worship tent, the tabernacle, that would serve as the center of their traveling camp, and the focal point of all their worship both during the journey and once they reached the Promised Land. But Moses would not join them there. Now, Moses is redeemed- He's talking with Jesus on the holy mountain, the transgression that excluded him from the Holy Land has been removed. Redemption like that for Moses must be included for us also. Lord it is good for us to be here!

Peter turned his glance and saw another prophet talking to Jesus: Elijah. In First Kings 18 this prophet of the Lord ascended another mountain, Mount Carmel, in the territory of Israel, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. He challenged the false prophets of Jezebel's evil god to summon fire upon their altar but they could not get their god to respond. Elijah doused his tiny altar with water and prayed to the Lord, the true God, and instant fire from heaven consumed the whole thing, water puddles and all. Even after that mountaintop victory, Elijah despaired that he might be the only one left who believes in God—to which the Lord responded, I have reserved 7000 in the

land of Israel who have not bowed down to Queen Jezebel's god, Baal. You're not alone, Elijah, and I will send you help. Lord, it is good for us to be here!

God has done some of His best work on mountain tops, from Eden which was the elevated source of four major rivers, to the mountain where God's Angel prevented Abraham from slaying Isaac for sacrifice, to the Mount of Olives where Jesus blessed His followers and then ascended up into heaven. For the longest time, God's people were accustomed to His dwelling in tents. King David was embarrassed that he had a beautiful modern (to him, at least) house while God was still dwelling in a temporary structure, so he desired to build a temple building. Yet the Lord assured David that both the tent and the temple building will be temporary placeholders. Instead, God told the king through the prophet Nathan, I will build a house out of you—the Christ will come from your family line so that the Son of David will be at the same time, Son of God, David's Son yet David's Lord as the hymn sings it.

That's the part that threw Peter off. God will continue to meet in grace and mercy with men, but that will soon cease to be done through a tent, or a building, or a system of Levitical priests and animal sacrifices. Jesus, the only Son of God, now stands before Peter as the new way God will interact with His people, the Church. He will soon head to the other Mountain to do the work the Father sent Him to do. He would die on Mt. Calvary to pay the world's salvation ransom. No longer do the promises of God proceed in the form of prophecies and dark sayings spread out over centuries waiting to come true. Jesus, the crucified and risen one, speaks, and God is with you, forgiving your sin, sending life into your weary body, hope to illuminate your darkness, peace to calm your troubled heart. What a transfiguration that is for you, all right here! You don't have to go to a certain single place to receive the gifts from your gracious Lord. Jesus

has come to you through His Word, through your Baptism, through His Body and Blood given you in, with, and under the Bread and Wine. So Peter, Jesus doesn't merely remind you that God has a loving plan and purpose for you, and then you have to build the tabernacle to keep that presence going. Jesus IS God's Love itself, standing there before you, speaking to you God's Words from His own mouth, empowering you to speak His Words to others as you make other disciples out of all nations. No need any longer to build tents on the mountain. Jesus will be with you always, unto the end of the age. Wherever two or three are gathered in His Name, there's the tabernacle, there's the grand mountaintop of God dwelling among us men. Listen to Jesus!

And as Peter, James and John woke up from sleep to behold the glorious vision of Jesus' unrestrained glory in the Transfiguration, you will one day wake up from your sleep of death to see Jesus' same glory on the Ultimate Day of His return. Your body shall rise to the majesty shared with Moses and Elijah. Like Peter, you'll probably recognize Moses and Elijah too—and I would expect there would be a lot more other saints and loved ones you'll recognize, since you all have become one Body with the whole Church, all who believe and confess His holy Name. Lord, it is good for us to be here! And being here means we listen to Jesus, and receive all the good things He has promised to give and the love He has intended for us to share.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.