

Transfiguration Sunday
February 14, 2021

"A Glimpse of Jesus' glory... and ours!" (Mark 9:2-4)

By Rev. Ed Weber

LSB 414

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday in the Epiphany season, is from our reading from Mark 9:2-4.

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus”

Here ends our text.

Did you happen to get a glimpse of the latest Space X Starship launch in Brownsville from your front porch? It looked pretty good maneuvering in the air, just got to still work on that landing though. Not too sure there would be many takers of test trials for a ride in it, like people have jumped in for test trial of the Covid-19 vaccine.

If you’re a bird watcher, it can be pretty exciting to get a glimpse of a rarely spotted bird. Maybe all of us will get a glimpse of a flurry of snow this weekend. You might have to drive up to San Antonio to do that. Maybe it’s a glimpse that those from the north would rather not see.

Well, Peter, James and John got some amazing glimpse of Jesus’ divinity and even saw Moses and Elijah. Yes, those two great prophets had no problem making a perfect landing on top of the mountain.

But as quickly as Moses and Elijah had come, then they were gone. And the Father’s voice from heaven that said **“This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”** was silent.

Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.” (Mark 2:8)

It was a glimpse -a quick glimpse of Jesus’ glory. It was a quick glimpse of two saints in heaven. And then, everything seemed normal again. Peter wanted that brief moment of time to last. Let’s build three tabernacles. That didn’t happen. But, at least, they saw a glimpse. At least they recorded their glimpse for us to again see this morning.

I. A Glimpse of Jesus’ glory

The transfiguration of Jesus marks the pinnacle of the Epiphany season, on the pinnacle of a mountain. We began the season hearing the voice of the Father from heaven declaring that Jesus was His beloved Son at His baptism in the Jordan river. The Father’s repetition of these words bookends the Epiphany season.

We’ve heard during this season the stories of Jesus calling His disciples, using His omniscience to convince Nathanael that He was the Son of God.

We heard the stories of Jesus driving out demons. In fact, as soon as He got down from the mountain, there was a crowd there waiting for Him, because try as they may, the other disciples were not able to drive out the demon out of a boy. The father of the boy, though, believed that Jesus could help him.

“The boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

“The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.” (Mark 9:24-27)

We heard stories of Jesus healing many people including Peter’s mother-in-law. The whole city of the sick came to Peter’s home. He spoke in the synagogues with authority. All these stories were recorded for us to see the manifestation of the divinity of Jesus.

And there are so many more that, depending on the length of the Epiphany season, we would also get to hear again. Jesus changed water to wine. He walked on water and calmed storms. He cleansed lepers, gave sight to the blind. He made the lame walk, fed the multitudes, and He raised people from the dead.

And there was one more very important glimpse of Jesus' glory that was yet to come. Jesus hinted at it to His disciples as they came down the mountain. Jesus Himself would be raised from the dead.

Peter, James and John were to keep their glimpse of the transfiguration to themselves **“until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” (Mark 9:9)**

Why is this mention by Jesus of His resurrection so important? Because it brings us back to the main purpose of Jesus' coming. He didn't come just to impress people with glimpses of His glory and become their earthly miracle King or bread King.

No, Jesus purpose for coming was to give people the miracle of eternal life by not using His divine power, and not showing His glory. Jesus had to die for the sins of the world. **Only through the cross could Jesus come to the glory of His resurrection!** This was the very subject of the conversation which Moses and Elijah were speaking about with Jesus. (Luke 9:30)

And this is what Jesus told His disciples...before He went up the mountain, and after He came down in Mark 9:30-31. Before He went up the mountain, in the previous chapter in Mark 8 we hear.

“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”” (Mark 8:31-33)

There could be no glory without the cross for Jesus. How difficult was that to accept for Peter.

How difficult for us to accept that we who follow Jesus to glory must also endure the cross. For in the very next verse, Jesus said, **“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”**

II. A glimpse of our future glory ...through the cross of Jesus

Is our first reaction to say may it never be. Let's skip this carrying the cross stuff and get right to the glory! Let's have debates about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Mark 9:33-37) just like the disciples did in Mark 9.

No, our faith needs to be tested and strengthened like Paul's. And that can only come through the cross. As Christians, we too will suffer the affronts that Christ suffered. Jesus reminded us in His sermon on the mount in Matthew 5,

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

We heard that Paul pleaded, yes pleaded with God to remove the thorn in his flesh three times last week. Sometimes our cross includes physical suffering. Again, what was God's answer?

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

When we are reminded of our weakness, we are reminded of our great need of Jesus' work on the cross for us. When we are reminded of our mortality as we receive the ashes on our foreheads this Wednesday, we are reminded that through our baptisms, we have received the washing of our sins. Yes, we are made whiter than any launder's soap could make us! Through our baptisms we are united to Jesus' death and, yes, His resurrection!

When we receive the ashes on our foreheads, we remember that we were redeemed by Christ the crucified and that He is the first fruit of those who will rise from the dead! We keep this glimpse ever before us!

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15,

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-21)

By a Man...yes, a true Man who was also God but didn't always use His divinity, allowing sinful men to crucify Him. That is how Christ removed death for all people!

That is why we can have a glimpse of our future glory by seeing Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus at His transfiguration. They are alive – not dead! Those who die in Christ are alive in heaven. Jesus kept the law of Moses perfectly in our stead so that, through faith, we would not be disqualified from receiving our future glory.

Yes, all believers in Christ will be recognizable in heaven. We will see our dearly departed loved ones again. And will see them not just for a glimpse of time but for all eternity.

This glimpse of Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus gives us so much comfort. They speak with Him with complete calm and complete understanding of the victory which Jesus would win for all on the cross. They're just talking with Him – so normal in heaven! So, will our conversation in heaven be with our Lord, as His brothers and sisters, reigning with Him as kings and priests. (Revelation 5:10)

In John's first epistle in chapter 3, John tells us that we will be like Jesus in our future glory.

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

Yes, beloved in Christ, we have the glimpse for now of Jesus' glory and our future. Why? Because Jesus went to the cross for us! A glimpse is all we need for now. We don't have to rely on people's accounts of near-death experiences to know that there is life after death. Our Gospel reading shows us! Moses and Elijah are alive!

For now, we follow Jesus all the days of our lives and carry the cross that He lovingly gives to us to carry. We know that we won't always have to carry it, for our glimpse of glory will turn into an eternity of bliss and glory. And that will be the mountain top experience that will never end! And there we will have not just eternal makeshift tabernacles, but mansions prepared by our Lord.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-2)

All glory be to God. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)

