

The Sunday of the Transfiguration
“Indeed, it is good to be with God’s Beloved Son!”

Luke 9:32-35

March 2, 2025

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Transfiguration of our Lord is from our Gospel reading, Luke 9:32-35

“But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. 33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” 36 When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.”

So far the text...

“It is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah”.

When Peter said this, he didn’t know what he was saying. The account of the Transfiguration in the Gospel of Mark tells us why. They were afraid. Fear kept Peter from thinking clearly.

Maybe, in the presence of the glorified Jesus and the two great saints of old, Peter wanted to treat them with the highest respect and provide a dwelling place for them. Maybe, Peter didn’t want the conversation that Moses and Elijah were having with Jesus to happen...that Jesus was going to meet His death...better to stay on the mountaintop.

But there is truth in what Peter said for all Christians – it is good to be here with God, in His presence. It is always good to be with Jesus, follow Jesus, and hear Jesus’ words in His tabernacle, in God’s house today, or wherever we are.

God gave Moses specific instructions on how to build a portable tabernacle in the wilderness that could be disassembled and put on ox carts. God manifested His presence in the tabernacle and there spoke to Moses through a pillar of cloud. And then Moses spoke to the people what he heard.

On the mountain top of the transfiguration, God the Father again spoke to the three disciples from a cloud but without a tabernacle. Hear Him. Hear My Beloved Son. And as the account in Matthew adds, “in whom I am well pleased”.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He is God in the flesh as He showed with His transfiguration. He is the living tabernacle dwelling with us in the flesh! And as Peter also professed in John 6:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

There is nowhere else to go except to stay with Jesus and follow Him.

We don’t have to build a portable tabernacle to hear God’s Word, do we. We just have to open an app on our phone and read God’s Word or hear His Word in the daily Lutheran Hour devotions.

Hear Him. In fact, right before Jesus took the three disciples, Peter, James and John up the mountain, these are the words that He said to all of the disciples and to us:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Jesus laid out before their eyes what had to happen for the salvation of all. Who is with Jesus? Who is ready to follow Him? Follow Him to the cross and also to His victory of the resurrection on the 3rd day? For Jesus then goes on to say, that if you think you can save yourself without Me then you will lose your life.

24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.” Luke 9:22-26

“Hear Him” said the Father from the cloud. Hear His words. Don’t be ashamed of His Words, but believe His words and the Son of Man will not be ashamed of you when He returns in glory after His death, resurrection and ascension.

Did Moses always hear and follow God’s words? No...

“Then Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

11 So the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

13 But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.”

14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. (Exodus 14:11-4)

So Aaron was God’s spokesman through Moses. And then there was that incident at Meribah...

“7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 8 “Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.” 9 So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?”

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” Numbers 20:7-12

Moses was a weak man just like all of us. He sinned against God just like all of us by not hearing God’s word and doing what God says. And yet, there he is in glory with Jesus on the mountain of Transfiguration. He wasn’t allowed to enter the promised land, but by the forgiveness and mercy of God, by his faith in the coming Messiah -Jesus, Moses entered THE promised land – heaven.

As we heard in our Psalm 99 for today:

“Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called upon His name; They called upon the Lord, and He answered them. 7 He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar; They kept His testimonies and the ordinance He gave them. 8 You answered them, O Lord our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, Though You took vengeance on their deeds.” Psalm 99

The God who forgives! Though there are temporal consequences for our sins, sins that make us cower in fear in the presence of God’s holiness like Peter, James, and John...Jesus tells them “Do not be afraid”. He tells us not to be afraid. Why?

Hebrews 9 tells us why:

“11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:11-12

Here in God’s house, we hear of this more perfect tabernacle – heaven itself – gained for us by the blood of Jesus. Here in God’s house our sins are washed away in our baptism in the name of the Triune God. Here in God’s house, we hear His words “given and shed for you for the remission of your sins” as we eat and drink Jesus very body and blood. And we have peace with God. We are no longer afraid. We love to come to God’s house because we hear the Good News of the Gospel of the God who forgives through Jesus!

So we sang in our hymn of the day in the first two stanzas: **(LSB 568)**

If Your beloved Son, O God, Had not to earth descended And in our mortal flesh and blood Had not sin’s power ended, Then this poor, wretched soul of mine In hell eternally would pine Because of my transgression.

*But now I find sweet peace and rest; Despair no more reigns o'er me.
No more am I by sin oppressed, For Christ has borne sin for me.
Upon the cross for me He died That, reconciled, I might abide With You, my God,
forever.*

Jesus did come down the mountain for He had to confront the enemies of sin, death and the devil and defeat them on the cross – once and for all. As soon as Jesus came down the mountain, He was approached by a father pleading to him to cast out the demon in his son.

“Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the majesty of God.”

But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, 44 “Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.” 45 But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it;” Luke 9:41-45

As we see Jesus’ glory and His powerful miracles, we too are amazed. But more than that, we are amazed at His words of life. For He hides His great power on the cross and allows sinful men to kill Him for the salvation of all people!

Let these words sink into our ears. Let them keep us strong in the faith that we have a loving, forgiving God in Jesus who forgave Moses, Elijah and all who humbly follow Him!

And on that last day we will hear a voice from heaven saying these words:

**“3 “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”
Revelation 21:3**

God with us. God for us...through Jesus the beloved Son of God.

Amen

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