

JESUS REVEALS HIS HIDDEN GLORY -- Matthew 17:1-9

TEXT: *After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Today we conclude the Season of Epiphany. During these Sundays we are reminded of how the Lord's glory was hidden under the humanity that He had assumed at His conception and was so evident throughout His lifetime. Day after day for 33 years, people saw Jesus as a man who was just as human as everyone else. The Bible even tells us: **... even his own brothers did not believe in him.** In 7 Jesus was just like them in every way except in the fact that Jesus had no sinful nature and Jesus never sinned. That must have irritated his brothers and sisters to no end. How would you like to live with someone who had no moral flaw and was always right?

But during Jesus' three-year ministry He often revealed his divine nature through miraculous deeds. He changed water into wine; fed the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 small fish; healed the sick; and raised the dead. This was so people would be led to say: Truly this is the Son of God!

Today we conclude the Epiphany Season with this last seasonal text from Scripture recounting what is called, "The Transfiguration of the Christ." In amazing fashion, the humble Jesus reveals the Glory of God that is hidden behind the humble appearance of a man. **THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE CHRIST REVEALS HIS HIDDEN GLORY**

The Bible says: ***Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.*** Wonder what they were talking about? Luke tells us: ***They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.*** Lu 9 Eight days earlier, the Bible says that Jesus told them some terrible things about this "departure": ***The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*** Lu 9 At this moment they are allowed to view the Christ in his divine majesty, and in conversation with two of the world's most famous men. But soon they would be reduced to nothing but naked faith as they would have to watch the Lord's Christ be so severely mistreated by both church and state that they would run and hide in sheer terror!

Sometimes we imagine that if we could only see what they saw, we could live more courageously. If we could only see a miracle or two. If we could only have the faith to "move mountains" as Jesus once said about faith. If God would only show me his power or give me a glimpse of his glory, then I'd have no doubts.

Well, let's see how this glorious sight worked for Jesus' disciples. The Bible says: ***Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.*** First if all, the sight made Peter babble something about building three shelters, or shrines, in order to preserve the spot and the moment. But the most important part of this Transfiguration experience is what God the Heavenly Father then said: ***This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.*** Shrines and temples, even beautiful churches like ours are nothing unless there are two things: 1. God's Word and, 2. those who will listen to God's Word.

Years later, Peter would think back on this amazing revelation of God's Glory. He writes: ***We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And***

we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. By means of preaching the Gospel, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one true faith.

In other words, where the Gospel is preached, and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, there Christian, men, women and children of faith will be found. That's because it is there that we see our Lord's glory, hidden in his promises of life and salvation. For example, we cannot see God's forgiveness of sins, can we? What does forgiveness look like? The parents of that man who died on the cross next to Jesus, if they were there to witness his execution, could see his sin and its consequences. But they could not see that Jesus had made him a saint, a holy sinless man to whom Jesus declared: *Today you will be with me in paradise!* Lu 23 We cannot see the glorious work of God the Holy Spirit as he is poured out upon the heart and mind of an infant as Paul declares: *God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior...* Titus 3 We cannot see that baby's newly-created faith, but Peter points to that baby and declares: here is a disciple, a Christian, a little priest! We cannot see or taste the presence of Jesus' body and blood that is hidden from our eyes but is truly present as we eat bread and drink wine to the words of our Almighty God: This is my body; this is my blood, for the forgiveness of your sins!

This glory of God is hidden in the Gospel in Word and Sacrament and is revealed to those who are called by the Holy Spirit and saved by faith. And for all who are saved by this faith in Jesus, the Christ's Transfiguration becomes a preview of our future glorification.

The Bible says that when Peter saw this transfiguration, he said: *"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."* While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* God the Father quickly interrupts Peter's idea with the instructions on listening to the Word. Luke even adds this information: *(Peter) did not know what he was saying.* Lu 9 So often we don't know what we are saying when we make plans for the Lord and his church. God's ways are not our ways, nor are man's ways God's ways. It is not man's way just to listen to preaching, to pour water on babies and kneel before a little taste of bread and wine. More impressive to us are our "shelters" or churches built and dedicated to the Lord.

Don't get me wrong. It's not a sin for God's people to build churches and to beautify them to the glory of God's name. But God the Father made it very clear to these disciples when he said: *This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* It remains the highest priority of this life that we beautify our churches with hearts and souls who sit here to hear the Gospel and to receive the Sacraments. For it is the Gospel in Word and Sacrament that the Holy Spirit uses to KEEP us in the one true faith until the end, as Paul also writes: *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ...* Ro 1

What does this mean? It means that we should hold fast to what we have through Jesus and look forward to our own "transfiguration." Jesus' is but a preview of what is yet to come. That's why when years later Peter writes about Jesus' Transfiguration he reminds us: *you will do well to pay attention to (Jesus' word), as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.* The Bible says that Peter, James and John fell face down in terror at the sight, but it also says that *Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.* As we live out our lives on this side of heaven, the glory of God will remain hidden in our pulpits, the water of baptism, and in the bread and wine that we eat and drink in the Lord's Supper. In fact, in view of the cross on which Jesus would soon be crucified, Jesus has commanded us to pick up our cross daily and follow him until that day when the Father will exchange our cross for a glorious crown.

That's why, to this day, when we recall the glorious event of Jesus' Transfiguration, we emphasize most what the Father said: *This is my Son, ... listen to him.* And now as we begin the Lenten Season, let us make our special mid-week services a priority! Amen.