

This is My Son... Whom I have Chosen... Listen to him!

Grace and peace are yours from Jesus Christ, your Glorious Lord and Savior, Amen.

The account of Jesus' transfiguration is such an awe-inspiring account, isn't it? Just think how so many here like to hike up into the mountains, see the views, be in nature... How much greater would it have been to hike up there with Jesus – and then to see him in all his full glory, full majesty... to see Moses and Elijah talking with him... It certainly would have been a day to remember!



This Sunday is really the book-end highlight of the season of Church Year called Epiphany. It began at Jesus' baptism as the heavens opened and God the Father declared, "This is my Son, whom I love" Jesus continued to display his glory and splendor in many ways, changing water to wine, healing people, teaching and preaching. Truly he is God's Son! Today the heavens open again, and we don't just SEE the glory of God – we HEAR it in the very words God the Father repeats, "***This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him!***" Today God gives our eyes this glimpse and our ears this reminder that the Glory of God Almighty is before us in Jesus... *hidden* in Jesus... *dwelling* in Jesus... and *revealed* in Jesus. Rejoice in these moments on the mountain with Jesus, and may we go down from this mountain ever more encouraged and confident in Jesus who has accomplished our eternal salvation.

I. "This is My Son..." the full Glory of God is hidden in Jesus.

The text simply begins, "²⁸*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.*" Just prior to this event, Jesus, for the first time, announced to his disciples that he was going to suffer and die and rise again. He then told them, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*" These were strong startling words, words that do not seem to reveal the power, glory and majesty which the disciples thought they had found in the Messiah. Taking up a cross, suffering, dying, where's the glory in that?

Following this event, that outward glory would be hidden – so that the full glory, the whole purpose of Jesus' coming – would be shown to all. In 8 short months from this point, Jesus would be on the cross. It's almost ironic, isn't it, that on the cross, God's glory and love is hidden to most every eye – and yet it is on full display?!

Jesus began this time as he so often did, in prayer. Luke says, "²⁹*As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.* ³⁰*Two men, Moses and Elijah,* ³¹*appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.*" His face changed. Jesus became as bright as a flash of lightening. We might think of how the sun beams so brightly off the snow-capped cliffs when you're at the top of the ski lift. It's so bright that squinting is hardly enough... and that's just the brilliance of the sun and snow. How much greater the glory of God – *hidden* in Christ Jesus, the Son of God!

When God reveals his power and glory, he hides himself in something or someone. You and I, just like the disciples, cannot stand in the full glory of God. His holiness is too great, and our sinfulness too wretched. Here, on this mountain, God's glory is clothed in the humanity Christ Jesus. The same pattern continues today. Jesus says of himself, that He is the Word, and that he is God and that he took on flesh – thus we do see and hear Jesus for ourselves – in the Scriptures we read. Jesus says in the sacrament, "This is my body, my blood" – thus we have hidden in plain sight – in, with, and under the bread and wine, - our Savior Jesus. Because we know this is true, we don't have to go searching for God on some high mountain, we have God's full glory right here with us, in Word and Sacrament.

Speaking of encouragement, consider Jesus for a moment. You're true God from eternity, you set aside your crown for a time to dwell on earth. You willing subject yourself God's holy law, keeping it holy every day. You know that each day you are one step closer to that horrid cross on Calvary, and your Father is going to forsake you. You and I might find it a bit difficult to live each day with a smile on our faces, and then minister to the very people who will call for your crucifixion; or surround yourself with a group of disciples who will deny you, abandon you and betray you? Can you see why these moments on this mountain were so vital for Jesus, to his Father thunder from above, "***This is my Son... whom I have chosen!***"

II. "Whom I have Chosen..." the full Glory of God is dwelling in Jesus

Luke tells us that, "³²*Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.*" There was Jesus in full glory, with Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Luke says, "*They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.*" What an interesting word choice "departure." The Greek word is EXODUS. Moses was the one who led God's people out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus too was about to lead a greater exodus, leading sinners out of their slavery to sin, death and hell by way of, not the Red Sea, but by the blood red stained cross of Calvary! Moses led people to the Promised Land of Canaan; how much greater it will be as Jesus leads us home to the Promised Land of heaven! Before Moses' days ended, he told the people, "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.*" (Deut. 18:15)

God raised up many prophets, including Elijah. The people were to listen to him as he delivered God's message, but rarely did they. In fact, they tried to kill him; but God delivered him from ever experiencing death, taking him to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11-18). It should be no surprise that these two are speaking with Jesus. That had put their faith in him some 1500 and 800 years earlier. The very fact that they are there, alive, talking with him about his departure... not into death, but into heaven... is proof that Jesus would accomplish everything: a perfect life, being the perfect lamb and the perfect sacrifice – all to conquer sin, death and the devil. There would be no doubt, Jesus, you are God's chosen one to accomplish what no one or nothing could ever accomplish! ***But - first the cross, then the glory.***

Peter didn't grasp this truth very well. He wanted to camp out on this mountain; he wanted to put up three tents. What a temptation for Peter *and for Jesus*. "We've got the glory, here and now. Jesus you don't have to endure the cross." Luke rightly states, Peter did not know what he was saying. No cross, no glory! No suffering Savior for sin, no eternal salvation. No cross, no glory! It was true for Jesus – and it is also true for us.

Take up your cross and follow me does not mean that once you're a Christian everything is going to be fine and dandy, that your marriage is suddenly better, that your finances are overflowing, that all your friends and neighbors are going to be kind and loving. We see the glory of God, not in earthly riches, power or fame, but in the cross. In the cross we find the one thing that the riches can never buy, that fame can't give – forgiveness and life! So we gladly take up the cross and follow Jesus, understanding that was the Apostle Paul says is going to be true in our lives too, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22) Jesus calls us to be his witnesses to the world – and yes, there will be times the world doesn't want to hear what God has to say, but that doesn't, or at least it shouldn't, keep us from following Jesus and letting his light shine – so that others might see the full glory of God chosen one.

This week, we have 3 young men to help us get that message out in a very specific and direct way. I invite you to come with Vicar and me as we go with them to simply invite people to come hear the Word of God, to come and see Jesus. People are bombarded by all kinds of words of worldly wisdom and advice; but most are just flat out wrong because it's all about me and self-glorification. It is God's desire to use us, all of us, to be his witnesses, in the home, in the workplace, in life so that others can put their faith in God's chosen one and being to, "***Listen to HIM!***"

III. "***Listen to Him!***" the full Glory of God is revealed in Jesus

Specifically because Jesus is coming again, returning as judge of all, we and all people will do well to heed these last words of God the Father, "***Listen to Him.***" The disciples needed this encouragement. They didn't really listen to him 8 days earlier when he first told them about his suffering, death and resurrection. We recall that even in the days before and after the resurrection, they still didn't put the pieces together. However, as we read in Peter's second epistle, written by him almost 30 years after this event, he writes, not only of this experience, but more importantly, about our need to listen, read, and take to heart the Holy Scriptures! He says,

¹⁶We 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. ¹⁷For 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." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹***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. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:16-21)

Take to heart these words, all these words! "Listen to him/them!" Listen to Jesus; listen to the Scriptures. God has so much he wants to tell you and teach you. He wants you to know the depths of his love for you and all. He wants to impart to you his holy wisdom. He wants to show you his mercy and compassion so that you can show it to others. He wants you to see the glory and majesty of the cross so that you can reflect his goodness and love in your life, in your words and actions. All these things he imparts to us through his Holy Word... in our daily Bible reading and devotions, in worship and Bible class. As we ***Listen to him*** Jesus whets our appetite and gives us glimpses of the eternal glory which he has in store for all who believe!

Until that day, we do continue to pick up the cross. We continue living as lights of Jesus in this sin-filled world. Sorrow, sadness and death are all around us daily... but so is God's glory! As we head down this mountain today, the next time we gather it will be Lent, Ash Wednesday. We will follow our Savior to the cross, and in each step, each act, each word of our Savior we will, by faith, behold God's glory – as our Savior accomplishes our salvation. We close then with the words of Hebrews 12, "***Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***" (Hebrews 12:2) Lord, keep our eyes ever fixed upon Jesus. Amen.