

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL
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Worship Series: *From the River to the Mountain*

Service Theme: *A Glimpse of His True Glory*

Sermon Theme: *Every Day Can Be Transfiguration*

February 11, 2024— 2 Corinthians 4:3-7

“It is good for us to be here.” And indeed it was! So good that Peter didn’t want to leave, suggesting to Jesus, “Let’s put up some shelters and stay here, so this glorious mountaintop experience won’t have to end!”

And who could blame him? It was an incredible moment! Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up a mountain with him. There, they stared eyes wide and mouth agape as Jesus was “transfigured,” meaning, his appearance completely changed before their eyes. ***“His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.”*** Divine glory literally radiated out of every fiber of Jesus’ clothing, and from every pore of Jesus’ face! If that weren’t enough, then Moses and Eliah, two pillars of the Old Testament appeared, talking with Jesus. If that weren’t enough, then the cloud of God’s presence enveloped them, equal parts glorious and terrifying. If that weren’t enough, then God declared to them, ***“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”*** Put it all together, and it was quite the glorious moment that Jesus’ three closest disciples experienced! So glorious, that Peter wished every day after could be filled with such glory.

But it wasn’t meant to be. Jesus and his disciples couldn’t stay on that glorious mountain in that glorious moment forever, because Jesus had all-important work to do. He had to descend from that glorious mountain down into the valley, his sights resolutely set on Jerusalem. Not so he could go there as a glorious earthly king or powerful conqueror, but so that he could look weak, humbled, and seemingly conquered there. That glorious Transfiguration could only be a glimpse of Jesus’ true glory for the disciples; a brief, fleeting reminder that Jesus is the Son of God. A glimpse of his glory to give them peace and

confidence during the upcoming days when Jesus would look so inglorious as he accomplished what he came to do; what we needed him to do. For Peter, James, and John, Transfiguration day could only be a day.

But for us, by God’s grace, **Every Day Can Be Transfiguration!** Christ’s glory isn’t limited to three close disciples, but is revealed to all people! Not limited to one mountaintop experience, but accessible to us 24/7/365! Which is why, ***“It is good for us to be here,”*** on Transfiguration Sunday—and on every Sunday. And it’s good for us to be here throughout the week for Bible Study. And it is good for us to be at home, gathered with family around the dinner table after the meal’s been finished. And it is good for us to be alone, in our bedroom just after waking up, or just before turning in for the night. Because for us, every day can be transfiguration! Every day, we can see Christ’s glory revealed.

Maybe you’re wondering, “Did I miss it? Did it happen when I left to use the bathroom? Because I definitely haven’t seen Jesus shining with Transfiguration glory at any point here this morning!” And it’s true, you haven’t physically witnessed Christ’s glory shining forth like those three disciples did at the first Transfiguration. But you have seen Jesus’ glory. In fact, you’re seeing it right now! The Apostle Paul explains in his second letter to the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth.

Paul writes, ***“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”*** We see Christ’s glory revealed whenever we read, hear, or the study the Gospel—that is, the good news that Jesus is the Savior of the world!

How so? Well, remember the purpose of Jesus’ Transfiguration. Jesus shone with divine glory, and God the Father spoke, to remind and reveal to those disciples who Jesus is. Likewise, the Gospel reminds us

who Jesus is. ***“Christ...is God over all, forever praised!” “We are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God.” “In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.”*** Just as Peter, James, and John saw the glory of God shining from Christ, and heard the Father confirm his identity, ***“This is my Son, whom I love,”*** so we see Christ’s glory shining forth from the pages of Scripture, and hear the Father’s confirmation of who Jesus is—the true Son of God, and Son of man.

In the Gospel, we also see Jesus’ glorious purpose, which he would accomplish after he left the mount of Transfiguration. As Jesus himself said, ***“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*** As Peter, the eyewitness of the Transfiguration proclaimed, ***“Salvation is found in no one else [besides Jesus Christ], for there is no other name...by which we must be saved.”*** And ***“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*** At Transfiguration, Peter wanted to stay in that glory always. But later, he understood that they had to leave that glimpse of glory, so that Jesus could accomplish his glorious purpose—to win salvation for the whole world, including you and me!

And by that Gospel, we’re connected to the eternal glory that Christ won for us! As Paul wrote in Romans, ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word about Christ.”*** And ***“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.”*** And ***“From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”***

To witness the glory of Christ, we don’t have to have that mountaintop experience, because the glory of Christ is equally revealed when three people get together to study God’s Word, or when you read Bible stories to your three-year-old from their children’s Bible, as when those three men went up on the mountain with Jesus. The glory of Christ is equally revealed when you cover up with a blanket and hear

God speak to you in his Word as when the three disciples were covered with the cloud of God’s presence and heard the Father speak!

So, why do we sometimes count down the minutes until church is over, or refuse to come at all, instead of wanting to set up shelters so we can stay in that glory forever? Why does the thought of having a personal devotion, or coming to a Bible study feel as laborious as climbing a mountain? Why do so many people in the world fail to see the divine glory shining forth from the Gospel? As Paul writes, ***“Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ.”***

Satan, the “god of this age,” is so good at keeping people blind in unbelief, so they don’t see the glory of Christ shining forth from the Gospel. He’s so good at distracting us with other things that seem more glorious, so that we get so caught up in prioritizing those other things that we lose sight of the glory contained in those pages.

The truth is, the Gospel doesn’t always look glorious. How glorious does it seem when our Savior doesn’t rescue us as a triumphant conqueror who defeats all of our enemies and captors by gallantry and power, like so many super heroes? But instead rescues us through weakness, humility, suffering, and death on a torture object used to condemn the worst of criminals? As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, ***“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.”*** And ***“We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles.”***

Kind of like what’s called the “Alexamenos Graffito.” It was a piece of graffiti from around 200AD, scratched into a wall of a building near the Palatine Hill in ancient Rome. The etching depicts a man standing at the foot of a cross, while another man hangs on the cross. Only, the man on the cross has a donkey’s head. Next to the picture, it says in Latin, ***“Alexamenos worships his god.”*** Do you get the point? Likely, the Roman “graffiti artist” was mocking a Christian named Alexamenos, who worshiped a “crucified God.” To the Romans, that

meant Christians worshiped a god who was a real...you know what. Glorious? Hardly.

The message of Christianity, that we're sinners who can't save ourselves, who are entirely reliant upon Jesus to save us, doesn't fit the glorious "self-made man," "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality that is glorified and idolized in our culture. Glorious? Hardly.

While we might think a glorious message would include some major visual proofs, like faith healings, or speaking in tongues, or major emotional highs, the Holy Spirit often works quietly but faithfully behind the scenes through the glorious Word to create or strengthen faith. And while we might expect a glorious message to be declared by glorious people, the most polished orators, the most entertaining performers, the greatest public speakers known to mankind, instead Paul proclaims ***"We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."*** God proclaims this treasure of a message not through his powerful booming voice, or glorious angels, but through regular, ordinary, sinful, fragile clay jars like you and me. Glorious? Hardly.

But remember the purpose of Jesus' Transfiguration. God gave those three disciples a glimpse of Jesus' glory, so that they would remember who Jesus is, and what he came to do during the days when Jesus would look weak and defeated, and when things would seem scary and uncertain. The best kinds of glory isn't that which always looks and feels glorious, but that which, even in weakness and humility, is attached to promises of future glory that truly will never end.

And as God in his Word reminds us of the glorious outcome that is ours because of what Jesus has already accomplished for us; and as God in his Word reminds us of everything that God has promised to do for us, then we're able to maintain peace and confidence in the glory of Christ, even when things in our lives look so uncertain, scary, or inglorious!

On that mountain, when Jesus revealed his divine glory, Peter didn't want to leave. He wanted to stay and bask in that glory forever. But they couldn't. As we begin the season of Lent on Wednesday, we'll be reminded of the need for Jesus' weakness, humility, suffering, and death to accomplish the glorious purpose of our salvation.

But because Jesus looked so inglorious, unlike Peter, we have unending access to see Christ's glory on display in the Gospel. Don't take it for granted! Make use of this gift! Prioritize it in your life! Bask in that glory with your church family, with your family, and by yourself! Live in the glory of Christ every opportunity you get, because every day can be Transfiguration Day!