

## Glory to Face the Days Ahead

Matthew 17:1-9

The Transfiguration of Our Lord, February 26, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

In the past American film makers struggled to portray our Lord. Many of the early films that featured our Lord did not show His face because they did not believe that the divine face of Jesus should be shown. The old *Ben Hur* film starring Charleton Heston was one such film. Later film makers did portray our Lord, but in order to emphasize His divinity they portrayed Him as being other worldly. One easy way to do this was to dress Him in white. *The Greatest Story Ever Told* is an example of this kind of film. Jesus is dressed in white throughout most of it. It is easy to tell who the one who is different from all of the others.

When the 1970s arrived there was an emphasis among the arts on realism. Jesus films then dressed Jesus in normal attire for the ancient world. The new problem that these films had was this. If the film makers were orthodox enough to acknowledge the divinity of our Lord how were they to portray that divinity when they knew that our Lord dressed the way everyone else dressed in the ancient world.

Some films even today present the Nativity our Lord by making the star that the Wise Men followed a spotlight on the manger. It was not that way, but it is hard for filmmakers to resist the art that results when that path is taken and at least such a path acknowledges the glory of Jesus.

So when Jesus is transfigured, He finally looks the way we expect Him to look. If Jesus is in fact God, then His face should shine like the sun. It should shine like the sun all of the time. His clothing should be a brilliant white. What other clothing would God be wearing? If Jesus is God, He should be on the top of a mountain all of the time manifested in this glory.

If Jesus is God, then He should also be conversing with the prophets. It makes sense for Him to stand there on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration and converse with two of the greatest prophets. He converses with the two prophets in the Old Testament who had climbed to the top of Mount Sinai and had spoken with God while there. If God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend then it makes sense that on the top of the mountain Jesus speaks face to face with Moses. Moses and Elijah had spoken with God from the top of a mountain before. It makes sense that they should speak with Him at the top of a mountain again.

It makes sense that Jesus should be enveloped in a bright cloud. God appeared in a cloud when He led the people out of Egypt. God appeared in a cloud at the top of Mount Sinai. God appeared in a cloud when He inhabited the tabernacle in the wilderness. God appeared in a cloud when He inhabited the temple in Jerusalem. God spoke from the cloud. So it makes sense that Jesus should be enveloped in a cloud and that the voice of God should come from it.

It also makes sense that Peter thinks that it is good for them to be there. Finally, Jesus is showing the glory that He claims to have had the whole time. Finally, Jesus is showing who He is and not hinting around with it. Finally, Jesus is doing something that really shines and not these miracles of healing and of the casting out of demons. Finally, a Jesus of glory. Who could blame Peter for thinking that it was good for them to be there.

Peter wants to stay there. He wants to build three shelters. He is too modest to offer to build one for himself and his fellow apostles. He is willing to build three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Let's hang out on the mountain for a while and bask in the glory.

Glory is attractive because glory means power. It means power for the apostles. It means power for the disciples. It means power for you. It means power over the enemies of Jesus. Finally the heretics will be silenced. Finally, the false preachers and teachers will know who the true Jesus is. Finally, the Pharisees will get what is coming to them. Finally, we will reign with Jesus in the glory that He promised us.

And you and I have been promised even more glory that the mount of Transfiguration shows. We have been promised the glory of the resurrection. He commands Peter, James, and John not to reveal the vision to others until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. Jesus thereby attaches the glory of His transfiguration to the glory of His resurrection. In afterglow of His glory at the transfiguration, He tells the disciples about the glory of the resurrection. Keep the transfiguration to yourselves until the glory of the resurrection is revealed. This means that every time Peter, James, or John would be tempted to tell the other disciples in advance about what they had seen when the Lord was transfigured they would remember that they were not supposed to say anything until He had risen from the dead. Then they would have said to themselves, "Wait. What? Risen from the dead?" And every time they would think about the transfiguration, they would think about the resurrection.

And so you have the glory of Jesus because you have the resurrection. You have more glory in Jesus than Peter, James, and John did on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. While Jesus' glory is profound and He reveals His divinity in rare form on the Mount of Transfiguration, the resurrection of Jesus is more glorious. The resurrection of Jesus is more powerful.

When Jesus rises from the dead He demonstrates that He is Lord of the living and the dead. He can move from one place to another. He proves His own words in John 10 that He has authority to lay down His life and He has authority to take it up again. No one takes it from Him. He lays it down of His own accord. No one can do this unless He is Lord of life and of death.

Since the Lord is Lord of life and of death, He is the ruler of all who are mortal. This is why the Scriptures repeatedly proclaim that He is the Lord over every principality and power in heaven and on earth. That means that He reigns over all of the angels. He reigns over all the politicians of the earth. Every politician no matter what the form of government will have to answer to Jesus for how they fulfilled their vocations.

This is glory! And that same Lord will judge the living and the dead. He will return from heaven where He ascended to sit at God's right hand. He will return from there with power and great glory. Every eye will see Him. As the lightning that flashes in the east is visible also in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Everyone will see Him. He will sit on the throne of His glory.

And won't it be good to be there! Your faith will finally be vindicated. It will be shown that you were right the whole time to have believed in Jesus. Won't it be great to reign together with Jesus in His power and glory over the New Creation? Jesus will conquer all of His enemies. The last enemy which was to be defeated is death and when He comes again death will be defeated. And He will judge the living and the dead.

The problem with such glory is that not only is it powerful and comforting when it is on our side, it is also scary. When the disciples were inside the bright cloud and they heard the voice telling them to listen to Jesus, they were terrified. They fell with their faces to the ground. And well they should have. When God appeared to Moses at the top of Mount Sinai, the earth trembled. The people were terrified of the voice of God. Any animal that approached God was put to death. The people were so scared that they did not want to hear the voice of God, rather they wanted Moses to talk to God and bring them God's message.

The apostles remembered this and when they were in the bright cloud they feared for their lives. God had told Moses that no one may see His face and live. What is the apostles saw the face of God in the bright cloud? Wouldn't they die? So they fell on their faces to prevent death.

The glory of God doesn't want three tents. The glory of God doesn't want to stay there. The glory of God will come so that it can be seen and then it will go.

It goes because God does not want to be scary all of the time.

God wants to be scary, but not all of the time. Therefore God wants to be glorious and is glorious, but He will not reveal His glory all of the time. Or to put it another way God reveals His glory in humility.

And so Jesus performs simple miracles. He performs simple healings, simple resurrections, He simply casts out demons. Those miracles do not look like much when you look at them. Even filmmakers don't get a lot of action and special effects out of healing accounts.

Jesus does not look like much we look at Him. Even when He walked on the water the disciples thought they were looking at a ghost. They did not think it was him.

He is dependent upon women. He only glows in the dark just this once.

But at least while His glory is hidden, He heals. And those miracles may not look like much from the outside, but they mean the world to those who were healed, to the blind who saw again, to the lame who walked again and all the rest. At least while His glory was hidden we could perform the command that the Father gave from the bright cloud and listen to Jesus. At least when He comes to us in great humility, He forgives us of our sins.

The glory of Jesus is His judgment. It is who He is and who we should acknowledge. The humility of Jesus is the speaking voice of Jesus that promises forgiveness and salvation.

So beware of envying the apostles and their vision of Jesus. We could easily have a vision of the glory of Jesus right now, but if we did He would only have arrived for judgment.

Be content with the revelation of Jesus that you. It is modest. It is His body and blood and His preached word. Because when Jesus is coming to you this way without glory, at least He can heal you and forgive you of all of your sins.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.