



St John Lutheran Church

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Text: St. Matthew 17:1-9

Theme: The Transfiguration of Our Lord

The cloud, the light, the mountain, Moses, Elijah... all these things show us that the Son of Mary... the Rabbi of Peter, James, and John...this is the God of Abraham. He is the God of Sinai... the God of all creation and redemption... and He is there, in the flesh. It is not His Divine nature which is transfigured... but His human. The Divine attributes have been communicated to the Human and these are shown in the transfiguration.

For most of His earthly Ministry, Jesus suppressed these Divine attributes ...He suppressed His Glory. Yet there on the mountain, we get just a small glimpse of what Jesus is like, we get to see both of His Natures on display without hindrance or shield. There are not two persons, but one. Apart from the Flesh of Jesus... there is no Son of God... no Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He who placed the stars... cast Satan out of heaven... formed the mountains... set the course of rivers... and who crafts each snowflake... is forever joined to the stuff of Mary's womb... made one of us... for us. Made one of us to be thee sacrifice... thee guilt offering... thee atoning death in our place.

And that is the conversation of Heaven. Moses and Elijah... the Law and the prophets... the council of God's ambassadors of Grace, are gathered together to talk about these things. To talk about the only thing that really matters... the only thing that counts... the only thing that endures... that being the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the life of the world. St. Luke tells us that they are speaking together about His coming exodus... about His execution and vindicating resurrection... about His leading us out of this vale of tears, out of death, sin, and Hell... and into Himself in Heaven!

And this conversation does not make those stern prophets sad, or guilty, or afraid. In perfect bliss, gathered to Abram's bosom, rejoicing in the reward of God's intervening mercy on their behalf... they are glad to talk about the death of Jesus Christ. They are not ashamed of it!! For they see the Day the Lord hath made... the Day when the builders rejected the Stone that God made the chief Corner Stone. They see the Day of Atonement, the Day of the Lord. They see the Day that the sun refused to shine... the day the earth shook... the day graves opened... when the angels wept, and a pagan Centurion wet the tip of His spear in Jesus' side and was converted by that Holy Spirit so that he boldly confessed, "Surely this Man was the Son of God!" They see that Day from on high, and they are glad in it. This is the Day they prophesied... the Day that returns mankind to God's possession... the Day that the Lord purchased and won them... the day He made to make glad the hearts of men.

But Peter is not yet there. He sees. He hears. He knows. He wants to stay. He is ready to leave behind wife and children, in-laws and employment, friends and neighbors. **But Peter's work** is not done. **He has, at** this point, already done good things. **He has confessed** that Jesus is the Christ, **the Son of** the Living God. **And he (Peter) had** even been given a holy interpretation, from God Himself, of his Name. **He was given** the wisdom to see that Jesus Christ is indeed his God and his Lord... **the Son of the Living God!!**

But, then, Peter tried to take it back. **Selfishly, sinfully, he** tried to stop the sacrifice of Christ and he was rebuked. **Again, here, at** the Mount he sees what is good. **He desires it. He now sees** Jesus in His Glory and Peter wants to bask in that glory and Peter doesn't want to leave...**he wants to live** and work and breathe and do it all in the Glory of his Lord...**but it is not time. Jesus' shame was** not yet full. **Jesus must suffer** and His Truest Glory will be seen in that suffering because in that suffering will fulfill His Name...**Jesus...Yishua...the One sent to save His people from their sins.**

And so Peter, sees and he is strengthened, and descends from that mountain. **He had been** nurtured there by God... **he heard** His Word. **He had** seen glory. **But when the** terrible and wonderful Day of sacrifice came Peter again denied the Christ, his Lord... **until that cock crowed with that cutting Law** and fulfilled Christ's prophecy... **then his** heart broke ... **then,** his tears of grief came... **and** brought him back again to repentance and faith.

But after that, and even after seeing the risen Lord for himself... **Peter** still hid behind locked doors for fear of the Jews... **until the** Lord came bringing peace and absolution and opened up His scars to the probing, proving hands of Thomas. **After that, Peter** was anointed with fire... **with the Holy Spirit. He spoke in** unlearned languages and God has built Christ's Church upon that God given confession of faith "**You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!**". **Peter has been** the instrument of conversion, bringing the Word of God, the consolation of the Spirit, and faith to many.

But still, even after all of that...**even** after a dream where the unclean foods of the Old Testament are pronounced acceptable to Heaven in Acts 10... **he, Peter,** the chief of the Apostles, preached heresy! **He committed hypocrisy** and false teaching. **For after that** dream... **and with** clear knowledge that the old ceremonial Law had been fulfilled... **he tried** to hold men to that Law again. **He, who was** to feed God's sheep **to free them...** **bound the** hearts of men to a Law already fulfilled.

Paul stood on the Word and had to straighten Peter out! **Peter's high Apostolic** office and great honor, **his heritage** and learning, **his special** place in history and extraordinary circumstances, were not enough to save him from his fallen flesh. **There is no** excuse for blaspheming God, for violating His Word, for selling out. **And even one** as zealous as Peter... **with all** his experience and promise... **can cave** in to the political pressures of men.

But God's Grace was enough. **It restored him** again, the way it always did. **God brought Peter** back by Paul's rebuke, by the power of His true Word which cuts to the heart and binds up again in perfect love. **Peter was humbled** under God's Grace, which makes men free. **In God's mercy,** he was not allowed to pretend his lies were pious or devout. **In God's mercy,** he was chastised and

brought low. **In God's mercy**, he wept, confessed, and believed. **In God's mercy**, he repented and the angels rejoiced.

Peter's glory came. But only after his shame was complete. **He did feed** God's sheep... **even us. And he did** glorify God by the strength of the Spirit and by stretching out his hands to die ... **he** finished the race and did not forsake the Lord even at pains of a martyr's death. **Thanks be to God. His mercy endureth** forever!

Now, let this be a lesson to us all. **For no one** who still resides in the fallen flesh is above God's Word. **No one is** incapable of error or is **without** sin... **without** the pride, lust, greed, and ambition that marks us as sinful men. **We must repent. We must submit** to God's Word. **It alone is the Truth, the judge, the rule, and the norm. And so the** Father's ever firm, and still always gentle voice from Heaven: **Listen to Him! He is the** Word made Flesh, **the Word** become **what He was not** in order that we might also become **what we were not... resplendent**, holy, innocent, just, beloved, and transfigured people of God!

God strengthened Peter for the journey by giving him a glimpse of His glory on the mountain. **It did not** keep Peter from stumbling from time to time. **Nor did it** take away all of Peter's troubles. **But neither did** Peter's stumbling keep God from loving and saving him. **Again and again**, despite Peter's sin... **God intervened** and welcomed him back.

And what, too, of Moses... **that cowardly** murderer of an Egyptian guard... **and Elijah**, that despondent unbeliever? **Neither had perfect** faith. **But the Grace** of God... **the exodus** of Jesus Christ in His Sacrifice was enough to perfect it, and them, in the end. **And so it** is also for you. **Listen to Him! Behold His glory** in His Word. **Behold His welcoming**, inviting, absolving Word. Behold, His mercy.

Come, and eat what Peter saw on the Mountain. **Be strengthened by** that eating, by being joined to the Flesh of Mary's womb shining with God's true love, united to Divine majesty. **Be consoled and** comforted by the God who has gone before you to bring you to him... **by the** God who desires to be merciful. **And rejoice in** the company of Moses, Elijah, Peter, and the whole cloud of witnesses already at rest. **For there on** the mountain Peter saw his future ... **and your** future in Christ's unfettered Glory. In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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