

*The Last Sunday Of Epiphany
Transfiguration Sunday*

February 10, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 9:28-36

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Aren't there moments in life you wish would last? We all have days we look back on and say how great it was to be there, days we don't want to ever end. Sometimes we feel it would be nice to have the ability to just freeze time and enjoy those days forever. I want to share a few pictures of couple of those days for me. This first picture obviously is of my wedding day. And yes I will still say it was good for me to be there. Even Lisa looks happy to be there, doesn't she? What a wonderful and exciting day! But if time would have stood still like we might have wanted on that day, I would have missed out on the past fifteen and a half years of tremendous blessings and memories we have shared as husband and wife since.

The next picture includes one of them. This is the day my firstborn, Katie, came into the world. How good it was to be there! I don't know if you can see from that picture but I looked at her not only with awe, but with a joy unlike I've ever experienced. I didn't want to put her down. In fact, I disrupted my very tired wife from sleep when I would not let Katie sleep in the nursery because I said she looked too lonely in there. As great as it would have been to stay in that moment, then I would not have seen my girl grow into this beautiful and loving teenager she is today.

And I wouldn't be able to show you this next picture. This is the day Andrew arrived on the scene. It was so good to be there. I still remember hearing the words: "It's a boy!" I still remember seeing the joy in Lisa's eyes. As awesome as it would be to go back and freeze time and stay in that moment forever, I think about all the experiences we would miss out on with Andrew if we did. I wouldn't have seen him hit that hole in one. We also wouldn't have been able to show you this last picture.

Yes, this is the day daddy's little girl, Rachel, changed our lives for sure. And yes how good it was to be there! I still remember hearing the words: "It's a boy!" only to hear the doctor correct the nurse by saying: "Actually, it's a girl!" While that is another day I look back on and think how great it would be if that day never ended, I also think of all the good times and laughs that Rachel has provided for us for these last seven years. I

guess the lesson God has taught me over the years is that while He gives us those blessed moments in life where it is good to be there that we don't want to get too stuck in the moment because so often He has in store for us something even better.

The three disciples that went up the mountain with Jesus on this day of transfiguration would come to learn this lesson as well. That had to be a day that far surpasses any day I have ever had here on earth. They got to see a glimpse of the glory that belonged to Jesus, their Lord. They enjoyed just a little foretaste of heaven. It is no wonder that Peter said: ***“Master, it is good for us to be here.”*** We can understand why Peter turned to Jesus and made this offer: ***“Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*** And yet Peter did not know what he is saying anymore than we do when we think it would be good to take a moment or day here on earth and have it last forever. Peter did not know what he was saying because Jesus' work was not done yet and Jesus had something much better in store for them. The same is true for us. As we turn to God's Word I pray it opens our eyes to this remarkable truth: **The Best is Yet to Come!**

About eight days before this magnificent event Peter, speaking for the disciples, had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus began explaining to the disciples what He had come to do as the Christ. He will suffer many things. He will be rejected and killed. These things must happen before He will be raised to life on the third day. Of course, the disciples did not want to hear any of this.

Now we read: ***“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.”*** The Bible never tells us what mountain, but that's okay because God wants our focus on what happened instead. We read: ***“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.”*** Just try to imagine the moment! Suddenly Jesus starts to shine – in a way that is almost too great to describe. Luke says like a flash of lightning. Matthew writes that His face shone like the sun and Mark describes His clothes as appearing brighter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And then two of the greatest prophets of all time show up in glorious splendor and begin to chat with Jesus as if they were old friends.

The three disciples there had seen Jesus' power on many occasions. They had seen Jesus reveal His glory again and again. But never like this before! Here they witness beyond a doubt Jesus is much more than true man. Yes, in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. This is true God. And there is no mistaking that this moment left a lasting impression on them. Years later Peter encourages Christians who were facing much persecution and many trials. By speaking to them of what took place on this mountain he wrote: ***“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye witnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1).*** This is a moment they would never forget and a moment they wanted to last.

“They saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)” Just like Peter to want to jump to action, isn't it? He wants to make their stay on this mountain permanent. He recognizes the awesome thing Jesus shows

them and he doesn't want it to be over. It was good to be there and that's an understatement! It has always been interesting to me that Peter's reaction doesn't even get a reply. We are just told he didn't know what he was saying. When we continue to follow Jesus down this mountain we see how true this is – Peter did not know what he was saying.

But don't we often make the same mistake of holding onto things we can't hold onto? Do we ever cling to the things of the world as if they were going to last forever? Do we ever try to make for ourselves a heaven here on this sinful earth? We all must admit at times our focus is way too much on earthly things. We chase the wind and go after blessings that are temporary and too often ignore far greater blessings such as forgiveness and eternal life. We too need the reminder that the best is yet to come. We need to set our hearts on things above. We need to see again and again why our glorious God had come in human flesh and blood. That's what Peter, James, and John would soon find out.

The best was yet to come because soon they would see just how much Jesus loved them. They would see just how far Jesus was willing to go to save them. In fact, this is what Moses and Elijah were discussing with Jesus. God's plan was about to unfold and they were talking about Jesus' departure or literally His *exodus*. Soon Jesus would be climbing another hill - this time with a beam of a cross on His back. But more than that Jesus would be carrying with Him the sins of the whole world. For those sins Jesus would suffer and die. Why does Jesus reveal this glory to these disciples and us before He goes to His death? So we understand the man being beaten, and spit on, and flogged, and crucified, and killed is not some helpless victim unable to defend Himself. Instead, we see true God as also true man come willingly to carry out the greatest rescue mission of all. This is why God makes it clear once again in a voice from the cloud: ***“This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”***

This Wednesday we begin another season of Lent. You now have the opportunity once again to listen to Jesus. Listen and see again the best of His love for you. Listen as He takes your sin and your punishment and your death. Listen as He suffers in your place. Listen as He does all this willingly because He wants to rid you of sin and cloth you in righteousness. Listen to how much He wants you in heaven. Yes, the best was yet to come for these three disciples. Do you think Peter would have traded what he would soon witness on Easter morning for this moment on the mountain? No way! For there Jesus showed Peter and all the disciples that He won for them more than a moment of glory – He defeated death forever and won for them an eternal glory that will never fade.

The same is true for us. Yes, God has blessed me with many awesome moments and days where I have said to myself: *“how good it is to be here.”* That's why it is so amazing to listen to Jesus as He makes it clear that the best is yet to come! ***“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2).*** The best is yet to come! When we reach heaven and stand in the full light of our Savior's glory we won't need to take pictures to remember, we won't need to build shelters, and we don't need to freeze time for we will have forever with Jesus, forever with eternal pleasures at His right hand. Amen.

