

## *Transfiguration Sunday*

February 7, 2016

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.*

Have you ever witnessed something that left a lasting impression on you? Do have a time in life or an image that is permanently engrained in your mind? Perhaps you might call it an unforgettable moment. Perhaps it was the first time you saw a mountain or an ocean. Perhaps you remember a specific sunrise you saw on a tropical beach somewhere. Maybe you can still picture the moment you first laid eyes on your spouse or child. Maybe your unforgettable moment was the day you received some good news that changed your life. I had one of those this week. There are certain things we will never forget.

This morning we witness a sight so glorious it's impossible to forget. Peter saw this sight and later testified: ***"We 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. For 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." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain"*** (2 Peter 1). The apostle John, who was also a witness, writes: ***"We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"*** (John 1). I'm sure if the apostle James wasn't so quickly murdered by Herod we would probably have his testimony as well.

Today, Jesus brings us with these three disciples up the hill we call the mountain of transfiguration. Here, with them, we get to witness something I pray leaves a lasting impression on us. I pray you remember this moment, not just today, but on our forty day journey of Lent, not counting Sundays, that begins this

Ash Wednesday. I pray we keep this sight of Jesus on our minds not only as we follow to His cross, but as we follow Him all our life. For today we witness: **An Unforgettable Glimpse of Jesus' Glory!**

Eight days earlier Jesus asked the disciples: *"Who do you say I am?"* Peter, speaking for the disciples, answers correctly saying: *"You are the Christ of God."* But then Jesus made some statements that His disciples did not want to hear. Jesus said: *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."* 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. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning."* Taking Peter, James and John with Him, Jesus goes up onto a mountain. We can't say for sure what mountain because we are not told. But on it Jesus begins to pray and something amazing happens. Luke says: *"the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning."* Mark says Jesus clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Matthew says Jesus' face shone like the sun. Imagine the brightest light you've ever seen.

But there is still more to make this an unforgettable moment! *"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."* Suddenly two of the biggest Old Testament figures are right there talking to Jesus. They appear in glorious splendor. They are discussing Jesus' departure. The Greek word for departure is exodus. These men of God are talking about how Jesus will provide a much greater exodus than Moses. Jesus will bring people out of their slavery to sin, and death, and the devil. Jesus leads people to a far greater promised land, one that Moses and Elijah were already enjoying. This departure is about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Are we starting to see why this was forever engrained in their minds?

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And what a time to reveal it! Why show this to the disciples now? Why do we get to see this awesome sight before we start Lent? So that we might see there

is a reason Jesus will soon be arrested and betrayed. There is a purpose behind Jesus being spit upon and punched in the head. God wants us to understand why Jesus would be crowned with thorns and falsely accused. We should never forget whose dead body would be hanging there on the cross and then buried. When we remember this glimpse of glory on this mountain we won't forget that what happens on that other hill happens not just to a true human being, but to the Son of God. All that was about to happen would happen to the Son of God who was never too weak and powerless to stop it. But Jesus endured all this to fulfill God's plan to save us. Jesus suffered and died for our sins because He wants us to share in His glory. He wants us to live like He lives and for our graves to one day be as empty as His. So before we watch Jesus suffer and die He allows us this unforgettable glimpse of His glory.

We need it. Because so often the moments we can't forget, the things we remember, the images in our minds are not good. The devil is a master at getting us stuck on a bad moment – those moments when in our weakness we have sinned. The devil is good and getting us to focus on our sufferings. He is good at allowing us to carry around guilt. So when we suffer, when we are feeling a burden of guilt weighing us down, when we know our sins and what our sins deserve, what an awesome time to walk with Jesus again in Lent. See what He does in love to take all our sin and guilt away. But before that, see this spectacular sight on this mountain. Understand the reason Jesus covers that glory and comes down that mountain is that He can share this glory with you.

So never forget this moment. I pray it is engrained into our minds. I pray we remember it when we suffer and think about what Jesus has waiting for us. As Paul writes: ***“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8)***. As awesome as it is to see a mountain or an ocean for the first time, that is nothing to what Jesus will one day show us. As great as that memory of the first time you laid eyes on your spouse or loved one might be, imagine how that moment will be when we get to see God face to face. As marvelous as it is to get good news such as you are now cancer free, imagine being taken to a place where no sickness or disease or sadness or pain or death will ever come close to you again! Hold onto this unforgettable glimpse of Jesus' glory until the day we will be with the apostle Pete in heaven and know what we are saying when we join him is declaring: ***“It is good for us to be here!”*** Amen.

