

Matthew 17:1-13

"A Glimpse Of Glory"

We left off last week speaking of the satanic strategy of sparing oneself. Jesus had revealed His Person (as the Christ, the Son of the Living God). He had shared His plan; that He *must* (because of our sin against God & God's love toward us) go to Jerusalem. *It would be there (in fulfillment of scripture & submission to His Father) that He would suffer many things from the elders/chief priests & scribes (including being beaten, scourged, crucified & put to death) & be raised the 3rd day.*

Peter; upon hearing Jesus talk like that was genuinely shocked, he was stunned. & He took Jesus aside & began to *rebuke* Him saying, "No way, spare Yourself Lord, this isn't going to happen to *You*. Not on my watch!" *Which invoked an even sharper rebuke from the Lord toward Peter. Jesus turned & said to him, "Get behind Me Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

You see, God is mindful of the eternal, man is mindful of the temporal. Man's 1st inclination is to *spare* himself, surround himself w/creature comforts. But Jesus is teaching us the priority of *submitting* our self to the will of God. *& It's not that God is out to make you miserable, but generally God's will for us isn't that we spare ourselves, but that we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others. Oh, I'm not saying that we're all called to lay down our lives for others physically (though some are), but Jesus is going to give us a lesson on what the cross means for us spiritually.*

You see, Jesus had spoken of the fact that He would go to the cross literally (He would lay down His life for the sins of the world), but in following Jesus (being His disciple genuinely), God has a cross that each of us will experience *personally* (spiritually/metaphorically).

Vs 24-26

It's been said that all disciples are believers, but not all believers are disciples. The idea being that salvation is free, but discipleship (following Jesus wholeheartedly) will cost you & not every Christian is willing to count that cost. We might say that there are those whose commitment to Jesus seems (honestly) pretty, uncommitted...

& Jesus is warning Peter against that mindset. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Peter, I've revealed to you My Person, I've shared w/you My plan, but now, rather than locking in w/Me you're seeking to alter God's plan *for Me*. You want Me to *spare* Myself, to *save* Myself, but what's needed is that I *submit* Myself to the heart/will/plan of God for My life. & If you want to follow Me & be where I am than it's required of you to do the same."

Don't seek to spare yourself, submit yourself to the word/will of God.

It won't always serve your comfort, but it will always build into your character & it will always serve your eternal good & God's eternal glory. Paul said that like this, *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Rom 8:28*

"Peter, it's not about Me conforming to *your* plan. You need to follow *Me* & submit to God's plan for your life." Listen, discipleship offers no guarantee of earthly glory. As a matter of fact, God told Jeremiah, *"...do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them;" Jer 45:5.* We're to lead lives that give all the honor & all the glory to God who alone is worthy. Our calling in this life is to what? *"Deny ourselves."* Listen, that's not the same as "self-denial". Self-denial is when we might give something up for a good cause or purpose. But to deny self is to surrender to Christ & determine to obey His will/word.

Isn't that what Jesus was doing? He wasn't declining some sort of delicacy or imposing upon Himself an ascetic, self-punishing lifestyle or something. No, He's set Himself to submit to the Word & Will of His Father. It wasn't about His will, but the will of another, namely His Father who was in heaven.

& When self is denied, that really only leaves room for others. To spare oneself is to ignore others, to submit to God's word is to serve others. Human nature is to indulge self. Jesus says, "No, deny yourself." Don't center your life around earthly ambitions, be fueled by eternal ambitions.

"Take up your cross", we could split hairs & make this a 2nd prerequisite but in reality, it seems to me that this phrase simply underscores or highlights what Jesus had in view when He said, "Deny yourself." To deny yourself & to take up your cross is essentially the same thing. The cross wasn't about self-promotion, or self-affirmation. *The person found carrying a cross knew that they couldn't save themselves & that they were submitted to the will/rule of another. They were serving the will of one other than themselves.*

& I think that the cross paints a very vivid picture of how "painful", how terrible death to self will always be. If you think that denying self, dying to self will be some kind of mild mannered, pleasant experience you have deceived yourself & you've set yourself up to be disillusioned. *The cross (though we've done a pretty good job of sanitizing & ritualizing it some 20 centuries later) wasn't about religious ceremonies, or traditions & spiritual feelings. It was an unrelenting instrument of death, it served no other purpose!*

Today Jesus would say something like, “If you want to follow Me, deny yourself & walk down death row daily.” There was no return trip from the cross, it was a one way ticket. The only hope for the one bearing the cross? The power of the resurrection.

So again, the cross speaks of surrender, submission to the will of another. It’s not having to deal w/things that annoy you or afflict you (“we all have our cross to bear”), no. That’s called “life” we live in a sin infested, fallen world. Taking up my cross is choosing to yield the members of my body to the Spirit God, being found submissive/subservient to the word of God rather than serving my own flesh, my own wants/whims & desires.

Jesus says, “If you want to follow Me, then *follow Me*. This is what’s involved, quit holding back, obey the Word of God.” Listen, to obey the *word* of God is to follow the *Son* of God.

But if you try to spare your life, save your life, you’ll lose it... Look at it like this, how can we ever experience resurrection power if we’re unwilling to die? **In all those areas in which I’m “holding back”, I’m trying to “save” certain aspects of my life. Maybe I’m afraid to give them over to the Lord for fear of what He might want me to do (forgetting that He loves me & has thoughts of peace, not of evil toward me).**

Maybe I’m trying to “save” (hang on to) some little guilty pleasure that I enjoy & want to keep hidden... But the only way to find the life that God has planned for you, has purposed for you (write it down, look it up Eph 2:10) is to lose your life for His sake. **Think about your life before you came to Christ, how was that working out for you (inwardly, your heart was hurting & empty)... Why then try to hang on to remnants of that old life? Deny it, die to it & you’ll find life, true life... Jesus adds extra incentive.**

Vs 26

So you save your life, you gain the whole world! But you lose your soul. What have you really gained? You surrendered the eternal glory of God for a passing pleasure in this life... I want you to realize the value that God places on your soul singularly/individually. Satan wants you to think you’re worthless. God says, “You’re worth more than all the riches of this world put together.”

Now let’s be honest. You’re not going to gain this whole world...Why then risk your soul giving your greatest passion to the pursuit of something lesser? Pursue that which is spiritual, eternal, there’s where the true treasure lies.

Vs 27

You see don’t prioritize temporary riches, but eternal rewards! Jesus says, “Comfort is coming, rewards are coming & you’ll enjoy them (not for a little while) forever!”

Those “works” you did for Jesus when you could’ve been pursuing the things of this world? He’s keeping record of them & He will reward you *for* them.

You may suffer for a season now (*maybe*) but suffering leads to glory, notice.

Vs 28

You see, Jesus has been speaking of the cross, of denying self, dying to self. But to follow Him isn’t all death & crosses, it’s also power & the glory of the kingdom of God. & Jesus is going to give a few of them a glimpse of that before they die.

Now this is one of those unfortunate Ch breaks because this Vs would serve Ch 17 better than it does Ch 16 (Ch breaks aren’t inspired of God). There’s been a lot of confusion over this simply due to the fact that the Ch breaks here. But Jesus is getting ready to give a few of His disciples a glimpse of His glory that will be coming in His kingdom & we see that when He takes them up on a Mt & is transfigured before them. It’s like the dress rehearsal of His 2nd coming ☺!

Perhaps you remember that back in Ex 33 Moses asked God, “Please, show me Your glory”. Here Peter, James & John are blessed & blown away to see w/their eyes the glory (albeit momentarily) of J.C.

Vs 1-2

Hey, there were no special effects involved, CGI (computer generated imagery) was not in play, they were seeing with their eyes the radiant glory of J.C.

This word “transfigured” is the Greek word “*metamorpho*” from which we get our word “*metamorphosis*”, it speaks of an outward change that comes from within. In other words, Jesus’ face wasn’t shining like the sun because He was *reflecting* the light, He was *radiating* the light. It wasn’t shining *upon* Him; it was shining forth *from* Him. He was allowing what we might call His “essential glory” to shine forth. When the author of Heb (1:3) refers to Jesus as “the *brightness* of His glory”, that’s what we’re talking about here.

When Moses received the Law on Mt Sinai, his face began to shine. But as time went on, it began to fade. Why? Because his glory was a *reflected* glory, he glowed after being in the presence of God... Jesus (on the other hand) wasn’t in “presence of God” per se. He’s the very *Person* of God, veiled in human flesh. So His glory isn’t something that shines *upon* Him, it emanates *from* w/in Him. He is the light of the world.

Now as for which Mt exactly this happened on, we don’t know (Matt doesn’t tell us). As for why Jesus chose only these 3 disciples, we don’t know.

There's plenty of speculation (some good, some not so good, but the bible doesn't say). One thing we do know is that this is something that they never forgot & it only strengthened their faith considering the persecution they would be called to endure. Yrs later they were still thinking about it, writing of it.

Do you remember how John opened his gospel? *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* Jn 1:14 We saw the glory of J.C. w/our eyes!

Peter had a little something to say about this event as well & we'll see that in a few minutes but I'm wanting you guys to get feel for what's happening here. For a brief moment, they were brought into the presence of the glory of J.C. A line was crossed between the natural & supernatural; between the human & the divine.

Now it's been pointed out (& appropriately so) that this wasn't really a new miracle, but the temporary cessation of an ongoing one. The real miracle wasn't that Jesus *revealed* His glory, but that He was ever able to *conceal* His glory! But check it out, as if it wasn't mind blowing enough that Jesus is there radiating like the sun, His clothing as white as light itself... look at Vs 3.

Vs 3

Wait what!? There they are, minds blown as Jesus is their radiating in glory before them, & as they seek to peer into the light... "Wait, who's... He's talking w/Moses & Elijah!"

What are they doing there? Again, there's a lot we could take in & glean from here regarding both their point in being in that place, but then also facts about what happens when we die. For instance we see here that they weren't in some state of "soul sleep", they weren't reincarnated, some 900 yrs after Elijah had been taken to heaven he was still Elijah & some 1400 yrs after Moses had died (physically) he was still (n reality) Moses.

Something else we see is that somehow (even though there was no formal introduction, they weren't wearing name tags) Peter, James & John knew intuitively, instinctively who they were. Often times people wonder if we'll know each other in heaven. In 1st Cor 13 Paul said that we'll know even as we're known. In other words, if you know someone here, you'll know them there. You won't need introduced, you're going to know who people are...

Now I want to say this as well. Sometimes people will ask me, "Are people in heaven in touch w/what's happening on the earth?"

The truth is that the bible doesn't really address that. We see here that Moses & Elijah were in touch at least concerning the matters that pertained to Jesus (Luke tells us they were discussing what He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem concerning the cross). So, I can't answer dogmatically, but on at least this occasion, Moses & Elijah were up to date w/what was going on. Beyond that the bible doesn't say...

Something else we see is that they were still human beings, they didn't sprout wings or become angels, & they enjoyed fellowship w/Jesus. We note they appeared to *them*, but only spoke w/*Him*. No offense, I'd be the same way ☺. If I had the opportunity to speak w/you or speak w/Jesus... Jesus it is ☺! Amen?!

But why these 2? Why Moses & Elijah. Sever reasons really. For 1 they closed out the O.T. scriptures. We read in the book of *Malachi Ch 4 (Vs 4-5)* "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

We realize that Moses represents the sum total of the Law & Elijah represents the order of the prophets, & of course the Law & the prophets all point to revolve around & find their fulfillment in Jesus. They'd both met w/God on Mt tops when *they* were on the earth, both were used to minister in the miraculous, both had amazing departures from the earth & as it pertains to the coming kingdom it's fair to see Moses as representing those who've died in faith & Elijah as representing those who will be caught up to meet w/the Lord in the air (that's literally what happened w/Elijah).

But here they are, & they're speaking w/Jesus. & As to where Peter was seeking to persuade Jesus to avoid His suffering, Moses & Elijah are encouraging Him w/the joy that's set before Him in what He's to accomplish through His suffering & death for the sin of the world. His suffering wouldn't be an accident, it would be an accomplishment, they were continuing to affirm His path.

Vs 4-5

Poor Peter... ☺ Rebuked by the Son, now rebuked by the Father (he's just not batting a thousand here). Now, Mark & Luke point out that Peter didn't really know what he was saying, he just felt like he had to say something & generally when we don't know what to say but feel like we should say *something* we (like Peter) tend to say the *wrong* thing... It sounded reasonable, "Hey this is awesome! I could build some little tabernacles & we could just hang out here, I'll make one for each of you!"

& We can be a lot like this, when we're in that place, feeling God's presence we don't want to leave, we kinda want to set up camp. But God has a plan & we need to pursue it.

Another problem w/what Peter said was that even though he said it unknowingly, inadvertently he was placing Moses & Elijah on the same level as Jesus & the Father was having none of that... "While he was still speaking... behold, a bright cloud."

Guys, this is that shekinah, the glory of God. We witness it in the book of Ex at the giving of the Law, we see it at the Tabernacle, later at the Temple & Here it is again. It was present at the Ascension & it will accompany the Lord's return. & From this cloud, the very voice of God speaks out... & what does He say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, *Hear Him!*" **God sets Jesus over & above the Law & the prophets, they're not on the same level, hear Him...** God the Father points us to Jesus! He didn't say, "Listen to Me!" He said, "Hear Him!" God wants you, He wants me to give heed to Jesus! **Heb Ch 1** (Vs 1-2), *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,"*

Now I want to point something out here & then we'll pick up the pace. When God said this to Peter I want you to realize that He didn't say anything more than He'd already said. **As a matter of fact it's a quote that combines Ps 2:7, "You are My Son" & Isaiah 42:1, "in whom My soul delights". And in Deut 18:15 God said that the One whom He raised up (in regard to the Messiah) "Him you shall hear". Here's my point, in speaking of Jesus, the Father only quotes His word previously spoken.**

Guys this should give us a little insight as to the importance of the word of God! If God only speaks to us in the language of scripture, how much more should those who stand behind a pulpit prioritize His word!? He's already given us (Peter said) all things that pertain to life & godliness in His word. So we don't need to venture off into other things, we need to stay true to the scripture...

But God tells them, "I'm well pleased w/Him." Translation? He's getting a course confirmation, He's headed the right direction. The cross is in fact God's plan. Something Peter would never forget... Here's what he had to say about this event. **2 Pet 1:16-18, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."**

Vs 6-8

Here again, they didn't fall on their faces when they saw Jesus transfigured, when they saw the supernatural manifestation of Moses & Elijah, but when they *heard the voice from heaven*, when they *heard the word of God*, they fell on their faces & were greatly afraid. There is power in the word of God, wise is the one who will hear it & stay true to it.

But Jesus came & touched them & said, "Arise, & do not be afraid." I'm going to trust that that's a word for someone today, whatever you're being overwhelmed by, Jesus wants to touch you, to set your focus on Him & give His peace to you. Arise, & do not be afraid.

They were comforted when their entire focus was "forced" upon Jesus only once again. Set your eyes upon Jesus. He's sufficient to comfort you, to save you, to bring you peace from those things which overwhelm/frighten you.

Vs 9-13

Couple quick things & we're done. Jesus told them to keep this between them until *after His resurrection*. Couple reasons. #1 It would probably test people's faith more than strengthen their faith at this point. "You saw what? Moses & Elijah to! I'm sure you did, did you get them to sign your scroll while you were up there!" ☺ But after confirmation of the resurrection this would be a radical revelation of His Person/power. But He also didn't want people to hear this & jump the gun again trying to force Him to become their political Messiah. He had to stay true to His mission, 1st the cross, then the crown.

But seeing Elijah they ask, "Uh, You're here, but the scribes say Elijah has to come 1st, what's the deal there?" & He tells them, 2 comings, 2 forerunners. Elijah *will come* (we believe he's 1 of the 2 witnesses of Rev 11). But Elijah *did* come w/respect to J.B. He went forth as a forerunner in the spirit & power of Elijah (zealous for God, calling the nation to repentance). They didn't receive him, they rejected him & he was martyred...

Count the cost of following Jesus, before honor is humility, before the crown there's the cross. This world is not your home. Honor the word of God, follow the will of God for your life. It will give God glory & make for your good eternally, amen?

Prayer Points:

Lord help us that we not be mindful of the things of men, the temporary creature comforts of this life; but the things of God. Living w/a view toward eternity, submitting our lives to You wholeheartedly. Strengthen us to honor & stay true to You, & to Your word, be glorified in our lives.

Before the crown is the cross, & Jesus laid down His life upon the cross for you. So that you, through faith in Him would never die, but go from life to life, the flesh & heart may fail, but w/my eyes I shall see God. You can be forgiven of all your sin & made new today, receive J.C. surrender to Him & be saved.