

JESUS' GLORY POINTS TO CALVARY

Matthew 17: 1-13, Mark 9: 2-13, and Luke 9:28-36 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

This past Wednesday, I was reading a new devotional given to me by a fellow pastor, Pastor Shawn Johnston, Pastor of the Assembly of God in Green River. I read from the July 27th devotional, in this book, entitled, “Leading from our Knees,” by Joe Turnham. The devotion was entitled “Transfigured Leadership— Leaving the Mortal Moment to See God’s Glory and Eternal Plan.” As I pondered how every year, our Vacation Bible School is a high mountain in our church’s life, I sensed God’s Spirit prompting me to preach about the Mount of Transfiguration. I sensed that what happened for Peter, James, and John was my prayer for each of us to experience. I have been praying in the midst of our earthly lives, with all our trials, testing, temptations, and triumphs, that at the end of our monumental week, today starting a new week, that we too have had some God sightings—that we have seen Jesus our Lord, in plain view, showing up and showing us how great He really is. Perhaps, between the virgin birth of Jesus and His death at Calvary, His burial and resurrection, Jesus’ transfiguration is the most significant event in the life of Christ in the Gospels. As I have studied that epic event in the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, I have totally given up the idea of trying to find any major parts of the event to focus on. This miraculous event is too chucked full of lessons to even try to capture it all in significant points. Without apology, the only way I know to preach on the transfiguration is to let us turn to the Matthew account and verse by verse to talk about what is happening in each verse.

JESUS WAS TRANSFIGURED ON A HIGH MOUNTAIN. (I.) We read in Mt. 17:1, “And after six days, Jesus took with Him Peter, and James, and John his brother, (Jesus inner circle of the 12 disciples) and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” What was the setting and where was Jesus when this happened? Look at Matthew 16:13-28. The place is mentioned. It was the district of Caesarea Philippi, which is a beautiful setting at the foot of Mt. Hermon, which is the headwaters of the Jordan River. Six days before Jesus took His disciples up on the high mountain of Mt. Hermon, 9,232 feet above sea level, 30 miles mostly east of the Mediterranean Sea, Jesus asked His disciples who people said He was. That’s when Peter blurted out the truth, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus told them not to tell anyone He was Messiah, for His hour to die for us had not yet come. Immediately, Jesus told the disciples He must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die, and on the third day, rise again. Peter told Jesus, “This will never happen to You,” or virtually, “You are never going to die, Jesus!” (Mt. 16: 21-22.) That’s when Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” Jesus went on to tell the disciples, in Mt. 16: 24, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”

JESUS WAS PRAYING WHEN HE WAS TRANSFIGURED. (II.) Notice in Mt. 17:2a. We read, “And He was transfigured before them.” Luke, the beloved physician, investigating this miraculous event adds something amazing. Luke 9:29

adds, “And as He was praying, the appearance of His face was altered.” Only Luke mentioned this. Luke’s investigation shows us this was Jesus’ pattern. We read in Luke 3:21-22, “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.” Jesus called His 12 disciples after praying all night. Luke 6:12-13 states, “In these days, He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.” Before Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was, He had been praying. We read in Luke 9:18, “Now it happened that as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him. And He asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And as you all remember, in Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus was praying. Prayer for Jesus involved an encounter with His Father’s presence. Often, when God shows up in His greatest power, is when we are praying.

JESUS METAMORPHOSIZED WHEN HE WAS TRANSFIGURED. (III.)

Mt. 17: 2b states, “And His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” Mark 9:3 tells us, “And His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.” Luke 9:29 states. “The appearance of His face was altered, and His clothing became dazzling white.” Matthew and Mark said Jesus was transfigured, and the word they both used was **metamorphoo**—which means to transform, and it literally means, to change into another form. Luke says Jesus fashion was altered, using the word **heteros**, which means not one of the same nature, form, class, kind, different. All three Gospel writers tell us there was a complete change in Jesus’ form and substance. In nature, a metamorphosis is illustrated well by the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Literally, Jesus’ clothing, and his body were changed from a mere mortal into a glorified, heavenly state. In biology classes, most of us have seen God’s illustration of this in watching an ugly crawly creature, a caterpillar forms a chrysalis, from which later comes a monarch, a painted lady, a viceroy, a tiger swallowtail, a lotus blue, a pearly eye, a lacewing, a cabbage white, or an apollo butterfly.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul used the same word **metamorphoo**, to call us as believers to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. For a short time, Peter, James, and John were in the presence of Jesus in His glory. They were in the presence of God’s glory which created wonder, awe, and even terror. Mark 9: 6 tells us the three disciples were terrified, shaken to the core in the presence of divine glory, power, light, majesty, and holiness. Their hair must have been standing straight up, and they must have been trembling.

JESUS WAS NOT ALONE AS MOSES AND ELIJAH WERE GLORIFIED WITH HIM, SPEAKING OF JESUS COMING DEATH AT CALVARY.

(IV.) Notice Mt. 17:3. “And behold, there appeared to them (Jesus’ inner circle) Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Luke 9:31 adds that these two great men, Moses, the greatest of the Lawgivers, and Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, “appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, death, or decease. The Greek word

is **exodus**. **Exodus** in the Greek means the way out, and Jesus' death is our way out. Jesus said, I am the Way, **hodos**, meaning the way, the means, the highway, the route for our journey, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and our Way out from getting what we all deserve, hell forever. At Jesus' death at Calvary, He bore our sin and shame at Calvary. On this Mt. of transfiguration, Moses representing the Law, and Elijah the prophets whose words pointed to Messiah coming. Moses represented those who died in the Lord, and Elijah represented those who will go up at the Rapture of the church, without dying, for Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind in a chariot of fire and horses. Moses wrote the Law which required the sacrifice of a spotless lamb and prophesied the coming of the spotless lamb of God, the Messiah dying in His sacrificial atonement to pay the penalty for our sin.

Obviously, Christ revealed in Glory, joined by Moses and Elijah indicated Jesus was about to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and to prove at His death at Calvary that death cannot destroy the glory that will follow. What a shock, surprise, and unspeakable joy to see the giants of the faith, Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus, men long dead—Moses died in 1451 BC and Elijah in 896 BC, who now were alive, in glorified bodies like Jesus, who knew about Calvary coming, about Jesus preparing to die for their sins and talking to Jesus about His upcoming death. It was almost like a divine pep-rally for Jesus, to say to Him, “Go on to Calvary.” Those OT saints, now glorified, must have seen the longing in Jesus' eyes, as Jesus spoke of Calvary up ahead, and His heart's desire to die for them and for us. There could be no more doubting now for these three disciples, after this unforgettable moment. Moses had said in Deuteronomy 18: 15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers, it is to Him you shall listen.” And here stood their Savior, the Prophet greater than Elijah. As J. Oswald Sanders said, “The presence of Moses and Elijah was the disciples' pledge of their own immortality, tangible evidence that the grave is not the end.” The transfiguration proves to us that there is eternal life beyond the grave.

JESUS AND THE TWO OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES TALKING AT THE TRANSFIGURATION. (V.) Notice Mt. 17: 4. “And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tabernacles/tents/booths here, one for You, and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Luke adds in Luke 9: 32-33, “Now Peter and those who were with him, were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. And as the men were parting from Him (Jesus) Peter said what he said in Matthew, “not knowing what he said.” Mark 9: 6 adds that Peter “did not know what to say, for they were terrified.” I just love Peter. He knew when glory had come down, and he wanted the moment to last. He wanted to prolong the glory. This disciple who confessed Jesus as Messiah, and later was rebuked for speaking against the cross, didn't know what to say. Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't know what to say, but it was so amazing you felt you had to say something? I'm with Peter. “Lord, it is good that we are here.” Glory. I have had a few God-sightings this week, and seen God's glory come down, when I didn't want the moment to end. I've wanted to prolong the moment. Peter never wanted the moment to end.

Jesus never corrected Peter or rebuked him. It appears to be the only time in the Gospels that Jesus never responded. Peter was partly right. Remember, this is the same Peter, who after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, said he was unworthy to die in the same manner as Christ, and he requested to be crucified upside down. Beloved, just as Jesus' humanity that day was transfigured by glory without ceasing to be human, so someday our humanity at the Rapture, we will be called to meet the Lord in the air, where we, like Moses and Elijah will have glorified bodies, without ceasing to be God's children, His Bride. Beloved, agree with Peter. It's amazingly good to be with Jesus, adoring the transfigured Christ. All that Peter got wrong was the part about building three tabernacles.

JESUS' FATHER SPOKE AT THE TRANSFIGURATION, OUT OF THE SHEKINAH GLORY CLOUD AS PETER WAS FINISHING HIS WORDS.

(VI.) Notice Mt. 17: 5. "He (Peter) was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." Remember Moses in Deut. 18: 15, prophesying of Jesus coming as the Prophet after him, said, "It is to Him you shall listen." Luke 9:34-35 adds, "A cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud, and a voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is My Son, my Chosen One, listen to Him." Wow! Peter, James, and John had good reason hearing this word from heaven from within the cloud that enveloped them on top of Mt. Hermon. This voice was going to say what Peter confessed, that Jesus said about, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." But now, God the Father wanted to say it not through Peter, but to Jesus, and to the disciples. God the Father confirmed Jesus was the Son of God, His beloved Son, His Chosen One. The Father made three things clear. (1) Jesus is the Son of God, My Son, My Chosen One. (2) Jesus is loved by His Father, as His Chosen One. (3) Jesus must be listened to, hearkened to, meaning, Jesus must be listened to and obeyed.

JESUS KNEW WHAT TO DO WHEN HIS DISCIPLES FELL ON THEIR FACES TERRIFIED.

(VII.) What did Jesus do? Matthew 17: 6-8 states, "When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only." This touch of Jesus was not just proof He was still real, now in His human body, but it was Jesus' reassurance to His three inner circle disciples that He loved and accepted them. It was a reassuring touch, followed by empowering words, "Rise and have no fear." Sometimes, when God shows us a picture of His glory, we are overwhelmed by His grace, but reassured that our faith in Him is not in vain, that we must not live in fear, and that He has chosen to give us a foretaste of glory, so we can endure what we face now. This past Wednesday, God did that for me in the tiniest way, but the moment I saw what He had worked out, I knew it was God's doing, and I felt His gentle touch.

JESUS ONLY SHARES HIS DEEPEST INSIGHTS WITH THOSE HE TRUSTS WITH OBEYING HIM, WHO CAN KEEP HIS CONFIDENCE.

(VIII.) Mt. 17: 9 states, "And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus

commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead. Mark 9:9 states, “And as they were coming down the mountain, He charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” Luke 9:36, adds that the disciples kept the confidence obediently. We read, “And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. This is so reassuring to me that God has, and He still keeps those among His Bride that can be clams, and who can keep a confidence. They did it. How could they ever have explained it all? They told no one. They listened, hearkened, and obeyed.

JESUS HAS ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS GLORY AND THE GLORY OF MOSES AND ELIJAH. (IX.)

Mt. 17:10-13 reads, “And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also, the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.” Jesus knows the difference between the “already,” and the “not yet.” Jesus knew His disciples were speaking about the final prophecy of Malachi 4:4-6, given in 397 BC. (Read it) Jesus was saying Elijah did come in His forerunner, John the Baptist, fulfilling the prophecy that he must come. But it was not yet time for the fulfillment of all things. John was beheaded, and Jesus soon would be betrayed, seized, and crucified. Jesus was telling them and us that before the crown first comes the cross.

JESUS HAS SOME FINAL APPLICATIONS FOR OUR LIVES TODAY THAT COME FROM HIS GLORIOUS TRANSFIGURATION. (X.)

(1) The transfiguration instructs us as to Jesus true nature as being not only fully man but fully God. (2) Since we will one day be like Him, I John 3: 1-3, the transfiguration is a picture of our coming glorification. (3) Because of Jesus’ transfiguration, Paul’s instruction for us to be transformed (**metamorphoo**) by the renewing of our minds must begin now. (4) Jesus’ revelation in His glory demands our response of reverence and worship, as the inner circle did, falling on our faces before Him, then listening to Him and obeying Him. (5) Jesus’ touch and calling us not to be afraid means we can join him in whatever we face when we come down from our mountain top experiences. (6) The transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the glory of Jesus and whets our appetites to see Him soon as He is coming again. Jesus’ transfiguration was a gift from His Father to strengthen Him for the suffering that was just ahead. Jesus by His incarnation is 100% divine, but He is 100% human. Though sinless, Jesus experienced pressures, grief, and sorrow. (7) The disciples were strengthened by this event, as it had to help them see beyond the hard sayings of Jesus, prophesying His cross. (8) The transfiguration gives us fresh hope in the life to come, guaranteeing our resurrection. I Cor. 15:42-44 says our bodies sown are perishable, but raised imperishable, sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power, sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body. Perishable means in our earthly body, like food in the grocery store, we have a shelf life—an expiration date stamped on us by God. But in our new transfigured body, we will have no expiration date. It’s forever and ever, hallelujah, Amen.