

## Why Climb the Mountain?

Transfiguration of our Lord – 2/27/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.  
Text: Luke 9:28-36 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 35, “**And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!"**”

### **Introduction**

- ✘ This dazzling transfiguration of Jesus up on the mountain is not only described for us here in Luke’s Gospel, as we have it today. Matthew and Mark also give us accounts of the same event. But here in Luke there are two major additions that are absent in Matthew and Mark.
  - ➔ Luke tells us the why, that is Jesus’ purpose for climbing the mountain – to enter into prayer and communication with God, the Father; to get away from the worldly distractions below and be in communion with God.
  - ➔ Second, Luke alone tells us the subject of the conversation that Jesus had with Moses and Elijah as they appeared with Jesus in the midst of His prayer.
- ✘ And the fact that we’re told in verse 28 that Jesus “took with Him Peter and John and James” so that they could witness this amazing event is significant as well. It means that Jesus did not want all of this to be kept away from His followers. Peter himself tells us firsthand in 2 Peter 1:17-18, “[Jesus] received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’”. “We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven,” Peter says, “for we were with Him on the holy mountain”.
  - ➔ So because God has seen to it that we have Peter’s witness, as well as the three Gospel accounts, it is clear that He wants you and me, and all people, to “climb the mountain” with Jesus; to hear His voice; to see His glory as we communion with Him as our God and Savior.

### **I. Jesus’ Earlier “sayings”**

- ✘ To fully appreciate what’s happening in our Gospel Reading though, we first need to rewind a bit. The reading begins with these words, “Now about eight days after these sayings...” (v. 28). So, what is it that Jesus said eight days earlier that was so significant that Luke was inspired to mention it and tie it together with Jesus’ trip up the mountain?
  - ➔ In chapter 9:20 Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter responded with his great confession that Jesus is “the Christ of God” – the long-awaited Messiah. So far, so good.
- ✘ But what Jesus said next, I’m pretty sure, sounded anything but “good” to the disciples’ ears. He said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Lk. 9:22). That’s a lot for the disciples to take in! What did Jesus even mean, saying that He would “be raised”? Very mysterious indeed. But the part about “suffering” and being “killed” – that was all too clear.
- ✘ Yet before they had the time to digest those words about what lay ahead for Jesus, He followed up with these words in verses 23-24 about what lay ahead for them. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it”.

→ To sum up then, the message they had been told that had to be percolating around in the disciples' heads and hearts was: 1) their Messiah would suffer and be killed, and 2) their own lives would include "daily" cross-bearing, which means daily dying.

→ With all of this, we have to wonder what Peter, James and John must have been thinking as Jesus takes them with Him up the mountain that day. Would the suffering and death come now? Was the day for their cross-bearing to begin now? Why climb the mountain?

## II. Jesus gives them a preview of the glory to come!

✘ With that background understanding, we now fast-forward eight days to the actual mountain events.

→ Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. And what they are allowed to witness is like nothing they've ever seen before. The appearance of Jesus' face is "altered" and His clothes become "dazzling white". The Greek Word Luke uses to describe Jesus' clothes is ἐξαστράπτων (exastrápton) and it means "to flash brightly as lightning".

→ "And behold", verse 30 begins in order to grab our attention, "two men were talking with Him, Moses and Elijah...". These two great heroes of the faith from Old Testament times "appeared in glory", verse 31 says. These prophets-of-old were great men. Today's Old Testament Reading says that "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10). Yet our Reading from Hebrews, chapter 3:(3) says that "Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses".

✘ Moses was God's servant in bringing the LORD's perfect Law down from Mt. Sinai and leading His people with it for 40 years to the entrance of the Promised Land. Elijah serves to represent the rest of God's holy Word as the pre-eminent of all prophets who spoke and recorded God's teachings to His people. Together these two men represent all of God's teachings, commands and promises that you and I find today in the Old Testament.

→ Ultimately these promises and prophecies pointed the world forward to the coming Messiah – the One chosen by God to come to earth and fulfill the promise of salvation from sin and a life with God beyond this life we know here; a life in heaven with God in His eternal glory!

✘ This is why Jesus climbed the mountain that day; why He took His disciples with Him; why, through faith He brings you and me today up the mountain as well. This dazzling display of Jesus on the mountain reveals two important things.

→ First, His true nature flashes before us like lightning, so that it cannot be missed. Not only is He true man in body and blood, but He is at the same time true God in all of His glory! And just in case someone tries to cast doubt on that, God the Father speaks in a voice from out of the cloud, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (v. 35).

→ And what message are the disciples (and us) supposed to receive and hear about from Jesus? That's the second thing revealed upon the mountain that day; the very thing that Jesus is talking with Moses and Elijah about; the same thing that they pointed all people forward to in their roles as prophets. Verse 31 says that they "appeared in glory"; the glory of God's eternal love and grace that they and all believers enjoy when they leave this world, "and [they] spoke of [Jesus'] departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem".

→ The Greek word for "departure" in verse 31 is "ἐξοδος" (exodos). Not only was that word used to say someone was leaving, even more, it was used at that time to refer to a person's death through martyrdom. So the same thing that Jesus was talking about eight days earlier is now confirmed for the disciples by God's prophets in the Old Testament. He is on His way to His suffering and death, His martyrdom in Jerusalem!

- ⊗ You and I know that this is indeed what took place; what only Jesus could accomplish as both God and man when He took all the sins of the entire world upon Himself to the cross and paid for the guilt of our sin by His death.
  - ➔ But His dazzling glory as God's Son revealed and affirmed and pointed His disciples to that one mysterious thing He proclaimed eight days earlier. Suffering and death would not be; could not be the end for Jesus. As the Son of the living God, death cannot hold Him. As the disciples witnessed on the mountain with their own eyes, Jesus is the light of the world – the light that the darkness cannot overcome. Just as He promised, “on the third day [He would] be raised” from the dead (Lk. 9:22).
- ⊗ If that is so for Jesus, then the same is just as certain and true for Jesus' disciples, including you and me here today. The cross-bearing and death that necessarily comes with believing and following Jesus will not be our end! The fact that Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain testifies to the glorious future that awaits all those who abide in the faith. Moses suffered a great deal in his life, and few prophets experienced more opposition than Elijah. But that hardship did not last. What lasted was their fellowship with the living Lord.
  - ➔ It's the same for you and me, my dear Christians. In fact, it's the same for our beloved brother Allen Heitschmidt, who left this earthly tribulation last Tuesday morning. He has passed through the temporary trials of this life into eternal glory and joy, with Moses and Elijah at God's right hand. So it is for all who believe – suffering is not our end, Jesus' gift instead is ours – a crown of life.

### **III. Coming down the mountain; listening to Jesus.**

- ⊗ Does that promise of glory mean, though, that you and I can somehow skip over the cross-bearing? That's what it appears Peter was hoping for on the mountain. And it's understandable, he wanted to stay up there and bask in the glory forever. So, he offered to build tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.
  - ➔ But, while it was good for them to be there, Jesus had something far better in mind. He wanted more than just a temporary moment of glory for Peter, James, John, and us. He wanted joys unending; eternal glory for all!
- ⊗ And that could not come about until Jesus brought them down the mountain and accomplished “His departure (His suffering and death), which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (v 31).
  - ➔ Yes, Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration so that He could then be lifted up for Peter, James, John...and us on Mount Calvary!
- ⊗ As His servants; His disciples and prophets to this world in which we live today, this why we enter into worship today and every Sunday; to see Jesus in all of His glory; to listen to Him as the Son of God; to be affirmed and strengthened in His promises recorded and revealed in Scripture.
  - ➔ And yes, it might feel sometimes like we're climbing a mountain to get up, get ready and come here into this holy place, before the presence of our God. But this – this is where we see the dazzling glory of our Savior; where we hear of His suffering and death for us and all souls; where we celebrate His victory in being raised from death; and where He feeds us His grace, forgives us our sins and strengthens us for the cross-bearing life down the mountain; out there in our daily lives.

## **Conclusion**

- ⌘ That's why Jesus climbed the mountain and why we climb it with Him; to see His glory and hear His Good News. For it's here on the mountain top that Jesus assures us in His love that we share in His glory; that our hardships will not last.
  - ➔ They will come to an end when Jesus takes us into His everlasting peace and joy; into the glory of His kingdom that knows no end. Amen.