

Transfiguration Sunday(2/11/24) SM, SJ

Mark 9:2-9 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” ⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

In the name of our transfigured Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Standing at the bottom of a mountain and looking up at it is very different view than being at the top of the mountain and looking down. In the same way, it is very different for us looking up at the Mount Transfiguration than it was for Jesus and his disciples who were at the top of the mountain.

Today we take our yearly pilgrimage up the holy mountain with Jesus and his disciples, as on this Transfiguration Sunday we:

Journey Up & Down the Mountain With Jesus

1. From the viewpoint of Jesus
2. From the Viewpoint of the disciples

1. From the viewpoint of Jesus

Six days after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God and then promptly sinned so that Jesus had to tell him, **Get behind me, Satan**, Jesus decides to take a trip up to a **high mountain**.

He chose only three members of the twelve to go with him. Those three were the leaders of the Twelve. Jesus’ final trip to Jerusalem was close at hand and the trip was sort of one last bit of encouragement and strengthening for Jesus as the horror and impact of his impending trial, suffering and death. He knew that Judas would betray him and Peter would deny him. He was aware how the same three he was bringing up on the mountain would fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Up on the mountain Jesus was strengthened through the brief time that he was transfigured. This was the glory that was rightfully his from all eternity. It was the glory that he had set aside in his humility to accomplish our salvation.

The Transfiguration was also a vivid reminder to Jesus of exactly what awaited him in heaven after he made the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. There his clothes would not be dazzling white for a moment or two, but for all eternity. There he would visit not only with Moses and Elijah but with Abraham and Adam and David and all the believers of all time

When we think of Jesus’ words, **It is good for us to be here**, we probably think that it was good for Peter, James and John to be there. It was good for Jesus to be there, to be reminded of what was and what would be. It was good for Jesus to hear his heavenly Father say,

This is my Son, whom I love. No doubt Jesus was both comforted and reassured of his Father's love and blessing on his work of salvation.

2. From the Viewpoint of the disciples

Yet make no mistake, as we journey up the mountain from the viewpoint of the disciples, we see that it was good for the disciples to be there on the mountain as well.

How different the view was for the disciples from that holy mountain! Unlike Jesus, they didn't know what to expect as they climbed the mountain. They did not expect to see the shocking and surprising vision of their Savior's glory and majesty. The teacher they had followed around for three years was suddenly revealed as their Creator and Lord.

Jesus's disciples looked at Jesus and suddenly they felt, they understood, that they can't hide or ignore their own sinfulness. They had been sinners, but the revealed holiness of Jesus made them more cognizant of their sinfulness.

How much we too need to be reminded of the true nature of Christ. Yet his revealed holiness reveals our sinfulness. It leaves us no room to hide our failures, no possibility of sticking our heads in the ground and trying to pretend that we meet God's standards of perfection. Jesus is perfect and sinless – and we are not.

Moses and Elijah! Neither had walked this earth for centuries, but suddenly there they were with Jesus! Our Christian dead are not lost. They haven't passed into non-existence. Moses and Elijah proved on that first Transfiguration the truth of Jesus' words: **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** (John 11:25-26 NIV) Even though we too will die some day, we will join Moses and Elijah at the side of Jesus in heaven.

Going up a mountain is not a quick or easy task. Even in a car, it's generally a slow, winding trip up a steep road. There is some excitement and exhilaration when you finally reach the top, but then afterwards, you have to journey back down the mountain and that takes just about the same amount of time as going up the mountain.

Today we climbed up the mountain, but sadly, like the disciples, we cannot stay up there. Much as we might like to remain, as much as we might want to spend more time with Moses, Elijah and Jesus, as much as we might want to spend more time basking in the revealed glory of Jesus, you and I must come back down and go back to our daily lives. Yet we leave the holy mountain having been helped and strengthened with Jesus, our Savior who shared our humanity, our temptations, and our need to be strengthened in the hour of trial. With the disciples we have seen the true glory and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ and we will not forget it. Amen.