

Mountain, Valleys and Caves Sermon Series:
Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration
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Matthew 17:1-9

Peter figured out the identity of Jesus: “*you are the Christ, the son of the living God.*” Jesus responded with stunning news. He would suffer, die, and rise on the third day. Peter, who had done so well earlier, made a rookie mistake when he tried to dictate the rules to Jesus. Jesus was not “nice” in His response. Peter got a serious and public rebuke. Not only would Jesus be put to death, but they would have to take up their crosses and follow Him. However, Jesus also let them in on big surprise. Some would not die until they saw Jesus coming in His kingdom. Then the story of the Mount of Transfiguration follows. The traditional site of the transfiguration is Mount Tabor, but it is probably NOT the actual site. Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the Prophets, are shown in subordination to Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment to the Law and the Prophets. Both Moses and Elijah had mountaintop, valley, and cave experiences, too. However, this passage is clear: Jesus is Lord of all. We see the highs and lows of following Jesus. On the one hand, disciples may suffer and die for their commitment. On the other hand, disciples will experience the glorious kingdom of God for all eternity. Abundant life comes to those who worship the eternal God. APPLICATION: Our theme this week is **worship**. Be sure to read how Isaiah felt when he had a vision of the Lord, Peter’s description of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration and John’s account in Revelation 1 of what he saw in Jesus. Jesus is beyond comparison. Our hearts melt in His presence. The only appropriate response is worship.

After Peter made his Great Confession (Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God) Jesus shared this distressing news for the first time. **Matt 16:21-28** *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.* From the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat.” Jesus delivered crushing news of His suffering and death. However, He also added the resurrection. They were too stunned to hear the third part of the story. *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* “Ready, Fire, Aim” Peter “rebukes” Jesus. No doubt, Peter wanted to protect Jesus from the cross. Many would agree with Peter – “There must be a better way than the cross for us to be saved! Why can’t we just work at it a little longer, be a little more positive, make some improvements here and there – and maybe we can be saved.” *But he turned and 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 has a rebuke of His own for “Rocky.” *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* Then, it gets worse. Not only would he die, but

His disciples should take up their crosses, too. They hadn't signed up for this. He was telling them to "lower your expectations and raise your commitment."

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Peter, your imagination is far too limited. Trust Jesus...it will end far better than you could ever have imagined. Now the scene shifts.

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And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He 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." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ 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."

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother Peter, James & John – the cream of the crop of the disciples meet Moses & Elijah – the greatest lawgiver & the greatest prophet. These are 6 great figures of the Bible.

and led them up a high mountain Some of the greatest moments in the Bible take place on a Mountain. Abraham's "binding of Isaac" took place on Mt. Moriah. Moses had his burning bush experience at Mt. Horeb & Mt. Sinai was where he was given "the Mosaic Law." Elijah had his greatest victory at Mt. Carmel, & he heard God whisper while he was at Mt. Horeb. Matthew loves mountains. Jesus' ministry began on the Mount of Temptation. Jesus rejected the false glory the devil offered Him at the Mt. of Temptation for the true glory at the Mt. of Transfiguration. Jesus taught "The Sermon on the Mount"). He prayed on the mountain; He fed the multitude on the mountain. The Mount of Olives was where His triumphal entry began & where He taught "The Olivet Discourse." He went to the Mt of Olives after the Last Supper to pray in Gethsemane, and it was the site of the Ascension."

² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses & Elijah, talking with him. Moses was the great Lawgiver.

Elijah was the great prophet. Ex 34:29-31 *When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Aaron and all the*

people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

⁴ ***And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here.*** Have you ever known someone like Peter? Peter interrupts the conversation Jesus is having with Moses and Elijah Peter is always talking but never listening. What audacity. Who does he think he is to tell Jesus what to do? He felt Jesus needed his advice. Why can't he just wait for Jesus to explain things?

If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Peter tries to draw attention to himself. Tries to be helpful, but is over functioning. There's a time for everything, including being quiet. Here's his brilliant idea. Jesus didn't "wish" for 3 tents. What will Jesus do with them, live in them? Turn it into a tourist site?

Another problem of Peter's is his "3 tent theory." Jesus, Moses, and Elijah are not equals. We hear people say we can be saved by following the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Mohammed, Gandhi, etc. That's not the way this will work. There's salvation in only one name (Acts 4:12).

⁵ ***He was still speaking*** Peter is just going on and on... ***when behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said,*** There was a "pillar of cloud" that led the Israelites by day and a pillar of fire by night to help them travel during the Exodus. ***Ex 33:9-11 When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. Thus, the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*** Exodus is full of highs and lows, but it ends up well: ***Exodus 40:34-36 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.***

“This is my beloved “agapetos” = the absolutely unique and solitary one. Son, with whom I am well pleased;

listen to him.” ⁶ ***When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.*** We saw this in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 1 when Isaiah and John encountered God. As such, the only appropriate response = worship.

⁷ ***But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.”*** I love this. Jesus had "the touch." He healed people (lepers, Peter's mother-in-law, the blind), but this a different type of touch – He spoke to their emotional need – have no fear.

⁸ ***And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*** ⁹ ***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.”*** Why did Jesus tell them not to speak? Would you want PETER to do your talking for you?

APPLICATION: Mountain top experiences...

1) Can happen to US - often happen when we LEAST EXPECT it. P/J/J had no idea what was about to happen to them. Neither do we.

2) We should put ourselves in the best possible position to hear God's voice. Remember "The Voice" said: ***“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*** Whose

voice are we listening to most often? (Personal story about the Western Wall in Jerusalem last month)

3) Are temporary. We can't live there. We must come back to the valley where most of our lives can be lived.

4) Should lead us to worship. There is only ONE to worship – Jesus. Because He is the only One who was Resurrected from the dead. We work backwards from there. I invite you to worship

5) Jesus earthly life ended on a Mountaintop...those who follow Jesus will end up well, too. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*