

Jesus Gets Us Ready for Lent

- I. The transfiguration clearly reveals Jesus is the Son of God.
- II. The transfiguration gives us a glimpse of the purpose of Lent.
- III. The transfiguration directs us to God's Word.

Dear Christian friends,

“They kept this secret and told no one ...any of the things they had seen.” How do you keep quiet about **something like this?!** No doubt the **other apostles** were CURIOUS about **what had happened up** on that mountain. “So, what did you guys talk about up on the mountain? Did ANYTHING SPECIAL happen?” But NOT A PEEP from them!

Jesus' transfiguration didn't happen just to WOW us. It's easy to overlook ONE LITTLE DETAIL in all this. ***“About eight days after (Jesus) said these words,”*** Luke reports. Just a week before this Jesus had asked His disciples, ***“Who do people say I am?”*** and Peter had made that beautiful confession, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** Right after that, ***“Jesus began to explain ...that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things..., and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”*** Peter tried rebuking Jesus! ***“Never, Lord! This shall never happen to You!”*** Jesus ended up rebuking Peter. He MADE THE POINT that He couldn't avoid His cross and neither can the Christian. ***“If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.”***

A week after that ***“Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on the mountain to pray.”*** AS AWESOME as Jesus' transfiguration is it had a purpose – TO PREPARE the disciples for **Holy Week**. With His transfiguration JESUS GETS US READY FOR LENT. **The transfiguration** 1)clearly reveals Jesus is the Son of God, it 2)gives us a glimpse of the **purpose** of Lent and 3)directs us to **God's Word**.

I. The transfiguration clearly reveals Jesus is the Son of God.

To be ready for Lent we must be clear on EXACTLY WHO Jesus is. Jesus is not just a GREAT GUY – a **wonderful teacher**. Jesus is the eternal, almighty Son of God Most High born our flesh-and-blood Brother. The OT had prophesied just that. Jesus has clearly shown His DIVINE POWER in His stunning miracles – healing the sick – **calming** the storm – **feeding** thousands – raising dead people back to life. Peter was right - Jesus is ***“the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** After climbing the **Mount of Transfiguration** there should be NO DOUBTS about that!

Jesus had gone up that mountain ***“to pray.”*** It SEEMS that as Jesus prayed Peter, James and John fell asleep. But WAKING UP what a sight they saw. ***“The appearance of Jesus' face changed, and His clothing became dazzling white.”*** You can feel the writers GRASPING for the **words to describe** this. Matthew says, ***“His face was shining like the sun. His clothing became as white as the light.”*** Mark has, ***“He was transfigured in front of them. His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them.”*** Jesus is giving us a GLIMPSE of the **divine glory** that is His as the Son of God. Jesus always has this glory but He HID it so to speak as He ***“made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, and was obedient unto death on a cross.”*** To see Jesus in His glory and to think that He ***“did not come to be served*** (AS He so deserved!) ***but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”*** WOW! WHAT GRACE!

But there's even more. NOT SOME dark, threatening storm cloud but a ***“bright cloud overshadowed”*** them. That ***“bright cloud”*** recalls the **various OT manifestations** of God's presence

“in a pillar of cloud and fire.” We hear God the Father speak from that cloud, ***“This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”***

Jesus gets us ready for Lent by CLEARLY REVEALING His divine glory in His transfiguration. As we follow Jesus to Jerusalem – see Him betrayed – **arrested** – **mocked** and **scourged** – as we stand at His cross – see His DEAD BODY **hang limp** on the cross – as we watch that **stone rolled** in front of His grave – THERE’S NO glory. Jesus LOOKS pathetic – like a helpless loser – a FRAUD – a VICTIM of **petty jealous**. How we NEED TO SEE this – Jesus in His glory – Jesus WILLINGLY laying aside His divine glory to GO THAT WAY of the cross **“for us and for our salvation.”**

Indeed, with His transfiguration Jesus GETS US READY for Lent by giving us...

II. A glimpse of the purpose of Lent.

Peter notices that Moses and Elijah ***“were leaving”*** but he didn’t want the GLORY TO END. So he pipes up, ***“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let’s make three tents: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”***

Being up there on the Mount of Transfiguration SURE BEAT anything the world down below had to offer. Here’s GLORY **unbelievable**. Down below was pain and suffering – sickness and **diseases** – hatred and **violence**. This was a LITTLE HEAVEN on earth. Up here Jesus COULD AVOID His cross and they could avoid the cross in their lives. Oh YES, Jesus, ***“it’s good*** – SO GOOD! – ***to be here!”*** So let’s just stay here! Luke explains, ***“He did not realize what he was saying.”*** To camp up there would haven’t meant THE FAILURE of Jesus’ mission as Savior of the world. There is no ***“crown of life”*** without Jesus’ **blood-stained cross**. There is no glory of heaven **without** THE GORY of Calvary. There is no eternal life in heaven **without** Jesus’ SACRIFICIAL DEATH on the cross.

Being up on that Mount of Transfiguration was a good reminder that we NO LONGER LIVE in the **Garden of Eden** and we haven’t made it to heaven yet. There’s a simple explanation AS TO WHY that is – Adam and Eve defied God’s **clear will** and ate the forbidden fruit. They listened to the devil – **did** WHAT THE DEVIL wanted! – instead of listening to God. And WE’RE NO BETTER! Born sinful we’ve followed in their footsteps. Yes, there are times we sin and we DON’T EVEN REALIZE it. That doesn’t excuse our sin JUST AS killing someone with a gun and then saying we DIDN’T KNOW it was loaded doesn’t change the fact that we killed a person. But how often don’t we KNOW EXACTLY what God wants and yet we GO AND DO the **exact opposite**? It might be with or PRIORITIES in life and where God fits in our lives – or the language we use – the movies we watch – whatever. Defying God has its CONSEQUENCES – death and hell. That first sin LOOKS LIKE **no big deal** but we’re still dealing with **the consequences** of it!

Jesus GETS US READY for Lent by reminding us of the PURPOSE of Lent. We’re told that Moses and Elijah ***“were talking with (Jesus) about His departure, which He was going to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem.”*** They weren’t talking sports or the **latest news** from heaven but Jesus FULFILLING His mission as our Savior.

Jesus had been carrying out that mission His WHOLE LIFE. Each one of us OWED GOD a whole life of **perfect love** and **obedience**. Jesus took the place of **all** people and He actually lived that perfect life for us. SOON ENOUGH – back down in Jerusalem - Jesus would bring the PERFECT SACRIFICE for the sins of the whole world and win for us a STUNNING, CRUSHING VICTORY over **death** and the **devil**. That’s what Good Friday and Easter are **all about**. Jesus didn’t die on the cross as a HELPLESS VICTIM but as ***“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*** Jesus didn’t stay dead and buried but rose triumphant from the dead on Easter morning JUST AS He **had promised** to do. That would be followed by Jesus’ **ascension into** heaven MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

Because Jesus DIDN'T STAY up on that mountain – because Jesus went THAT WAY of the **cross** and the **grave** – we can be absolutely sure of God's **forgiveness** of all our sins. Yes, we can be absolutely sure that God **really does** LOVE us – that God always keeps His **promises**.

Because Jesus DIDN'T STAY up on that mountain we can be absolutely sure we're GOING STRAIGHT to heaven when we die. **This** was a temporary glimpse of heaven's glory. We can confidently look forward to ALL ETERNITY in heaven's glory. SAVOR it even now! We are going to live with Jesus IN ALL His glory in the real heaven – with our own glorified bodies – reunited with all our **Christian loved ones** – and it will NEVER, EVER END! All because Jesus CAME DOWN this mount and went the way of His cross. **How** can we not follow Jesus on that journey?!

Jesus get us ready for that **Lenten journey**...

III. By directing us to His Word.

Did you notice that Moses and Elijah were also **"in glory"**? Moses had died some **1400 years** before this. Elijah had been miraculously taken directly to heaven WITHOUT dying. We're not told why God **chose** these two men. Both had SPECIAL ROLES in the OT. God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and to the Promised Land of Canaan. God used Elijah to call the Israelites BACK TO HIM as the only real God – their only Savior. BOTH Moses and Elijah were less than perfect as leaders but GOD STILL USED them to teach His people His Word and to lead them in **God-pleasing** ways. God here IN A SPECIAL WAY put His stamp of approval on their **message still today**.

The Father unmistakably did that with Jesus. **"Listen to Him!"** – literally, "BE listening – **continue** to listen to Him!" Nobody has the OPTION of not listening to Jesus. Not you or me – our children or grandchildren – our neighbors – our **church**. God ORDERS ALL people to **"listen"** to Jesus.

We do that by FAITHFULLY HEARING God's Word – faithfully coming to church – having those devotions at home – coming to Bible class – providing our children a **solid Christian** education. That's NOT A CHORE or a bother but a REAL BLESSING!

Through His Word Jesus GETS US READY for Lent – **ready** for life now here on earth – **ready** for eternal life in heaven. Only through God's Word do we know the REAL MEANING and purpose of Lent. **Only through** God's Word can we grow in our faith and stay close to our Savior. **Only through** God's Word can we recognize the **devil's lies** – do we have the strength NOT TO FALL for the **world's ways** and to SAY NO to our **sinful natures**. **Only through** God's Word do we learn of God's love – forgiveness – promises. **"Listen to Him!"** – yes, keep on listening to Jesus UNTIL WE SEE Jesus in all His glory in heaven. Amen.

NICENE CREED