

“This Is Jesus: Glorious!”

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³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Our sermon lesson takes place a few months before Jesus would suffer and die on the cross. That’s why we always observe Jesus Transfiguration as the last Sunday of the church season of Epiphany right before we enter into the season of Lent. Jesus and his disciples took a little trip to the region of Caesarea Philippi, 30 miles north the Sea of Galilee. During this trip Jesus reminded his disciples that his mission involved suffering and death. It was also during this trip that Jesus promised that he would build the Christian Church upon the rock solid confession of people like Peter who confess the forgiveness of all sins and eternal salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. 8 days after that conversation, Jesus climbed Mt. Hermon with Peter, James, and John. We don’t know if they climbed to the top or not, but let’s assume they did. Mt. Hermon stands 9232 feet above sea level. To put that into perspective, Holy Hill in Hubertus stands 1350 feet above sea level. Back in 2000, when I spent my vicar year in Colorado, I climbed Mt. Elbert (summit is 14,439 feet) the tallest peak in Colorado. While it is one of the most memorable things I’ve ever experienced, it was also a tiring all day event to climb to the top and come back down. My point is that this wasn’t some quick climb for Jesus and those 3 disciples. While this was a memorable event, it was also a tiring all day event. No wonder Peter, James, and John fell asleep.

Life is like that. It has its temporary moments of fun, but it’s also a long tiring uphill climb. Consider how that was true for all the people on Mt. Hermon that day. Moses, leader of the nation of Israel. His parents had to give him up as a baby to save his life. Murdered an Egyptian as an adult and went into hiding for 40 years. Called by God to be leader over Israel even though he felt totally unqualified and inadequate for the job. Lost his temper on multiple occasions as he didn’t always react with Love and Logic toward the stubborn and rebellious people of Israel. Or consider Elijah, prophet of God. Several times he experienced the uncomfortableness of not having enough food to eat. He knew well the frustration of dealing with government leaders who care nothing for the Word of God. He had to deal with threats against his life for being a Christian. Famously he asked God to end his life because his life

was too hard and he felt so alone, like the only Christian left on earth. Or consider James. He was put in his place by Jesus when he and his brother, John, legendarily had their mother ask Jesus if her boys could have prominent positions in Heaven near Jesus. He knew firsthand what it was like to be persecuted as he was the first of the 12 apostles to be martyred for being a following of Jesus. Or consider John. He had to deal with the heartache of losing his brother James and his close friends and fellow apostles – all to martyr's deaths. He faced many threats against his own life, yet he knew the loneliness of being the only one among the brothers who lived into old age. He bore the burden of caring for Mary after Jesus death. He lived to see the city of Jerusalem and the temple destroyed. He was arrested and exiled for proclaiming Jesus Christ as Savior. Or consider Peter who knew the embarrassment of sticking his foot in his mouth so many times. Peter, who knew the overwhelming feeling of balancing family and being an active leader in the church. Peter who knew the frustration of knowing God's Word yet struggling to carry it out in his life at times. Peter who knew the pain of hurting and letting down someone close to you. Or consider Jesus. He knew the struggle that is facing temptations to sin. He knew what it was like to be made fun of, rejected, and misunderstood. He knew what it felt like to be overwhelmed with responsibility. In a few short months he would be on a cross suffering the weighty responsibility and punishment of Hell for the sins of the entire world – including yours and mine!

All six men on that mountain went through serious faith challenging times. While our life's burdens seem like child's play in comparison to what those six men on the mountain experienced, our burdens are still burdens to us. We can relate to life sometimes feeling like an uphill tiring climb? Filled with busyness. Filled with stress. Filled with worries. Filled with struggles. Filled with hard work. Filled with uncomfortable situations. Filled with disappointments. Filled with regrets. Filled with guilt both warranted by our sins and unwarranted as we just feel bad about things out of our control. That's REAL life! Don't we all need something to look forward to? How about this – This Is Jesus in all of his Glory! ²⁸ **About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.** ²⁹ **As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** ³⁰ **Two men, Moses and Elijah,** ³¹ **appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** ³² **Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.** ³³ **As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)**

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Even though it was only a short glimpse of Heaven, it's exactly what Jesus, Peter, James, and John needed to walk down that mountain and live in the REAL world and carry out the mission God called them to. And the same is true of us. Our time together here is a little glimpse of Heaven. And our time spent listening to Jesus in his Word is a glimpse of Heaven. But we have to walk down the mountain again and live in the REAL world every time we leave this place and the majority of our life not spent in God's Word. But as we do, let's never forget what awaits us in Heaven. What happened on that mountain is a little

peek into the Promised Land, a little peek into Heaven as we see Jesus in all of his Heavenly glory. In Heaven we will get to see Jesus have conversations with Moses and Elijah! In Heaven we will get to have conversations with Jesus too, and Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John, and all the rest. In Heaven we will see Jesus in all of his glory, having defeated every last enemy including physical death. Just think, that body you have now that gets sick and injured or is breaking down with age – it will feel young, strong, and healthy again! If we were on the Mountain of Transfiguration that day and had the chance to ask Moses and Elijah how they did it – how they were able to deal with all burdens of life – I think they would have looked at us funny. They would have ignored us just like they did Peter’s question because it is a silly question. They had been in Heaven already for over a thousand years. The burdens of their earthly life were forgotten and the eternal pleasures of Heaven is all they knew and were focused on. The past burdens of life on earth were long forgotten. That’s what awaits us!

Jesus Transfiguration is a reminder that this is the glorious and victorious Savior God who walks with us through life. Jesus Transfiguration is also a reminder that, in the end, this life isn’t all there is and that the hardness of this life simply will not win. Jesus wins, and because of Him You win too! Jesus transfiguration is a reminder that we get to live with an eternal perspective; one that allows you to exist right now knowing that one day all your busyness will be replaced with taking your time, all your stress and worry will be replaced with confidence, all your hard work will seem easy and satisfying, all your relationships will be peaceful, all your hurts will be healed, all your tears will be dried, all your guilt will be replaced with eternal joy. This is Jesus: He is Glorious! And through faith in him as our Savior, we can look forward to it being eternally glorious for us as well in Heaven. Let’s never forget that! Amen.