

“If this could only last...”

² 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. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter 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.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As 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.

On December 10th I played 9 holes of golf. It was sunny and 54 degrees. If only golf weather in Wisconsin could last all year round. I don't think any of us like bitter cold temps, but some of you do like to snowmobile and enjoy other winter activities. So some of you think, “If only winter and snow could last longer.” There are those periods of life, those special events, those moments in time that bring great joy, happiness, and satisfaction. The day of your wedding, the birth of your children or grandchildren, that special time spent with family or friends or that special someone, a milestone birthday or anniversary, the day your favorite team wins the championship or some sports success that you personally enjoyed, the satisfaction of finishing a project or being recognized for your hard work, an amazing concert you attended, a vacation you went on, the day that thing that you have been waiting to happen (whatever it is) finally happens, the day of your baptism or confirmation. If only these special moments in life could last, but they don't. Life has these high point moments, but then we have to come back down to reality and live most our lives experiencing normal moments and even difficult moments.

Consider our friends from today's Scripture lessons. They knew all too well the highs, lows, and normals of life. Consider Moses. Multiple times Moses experienced amazing “can you believe what I just saw or was allowed to do” moments on Mt. Sinai or at the Red Sea and many more times and there were plenty of other difficult moments like his forty-year exile for killing a man or dealing with the grumbling Israelites for forty years in the wilderness or not being allowed to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. Consider the prophet Elijah. One moment Elijah was proving in spectacular fashion to the prophets of Baal that their God wasn't real and his was and the next moment his life was being threatened and he thought he was the only Christian left on earth and he wanted to die. Consider the prophet Elisha. One moment Elisha is struggling to deal with the reality that his mentor, Elijah, is going to go to Heaven and he will be left alone on this earth and the next moment he gets to witness his mentor being taken to Heaven in amazing fashion. Consider the Apostle Paul who wrote our New Testament lesson today. Countless times he experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit bringing people to faith in Jesus as Paul shared the Gospel with them and the encouragement he enjoyed from the support given him by Christians around the world where he was blessed to start Christian congregations. But then there were countless people who

rejected the Gospel he shared and the countless times his life was in danger because he was a bold Gospel minister. Consider Peter, James, and John. They got to hear Jesus preach and witnessed so many of his miracles, and they got to do miracles also and experience the joy of their Gospel proclamation bear fruit, but in the next moment they are being put in jail or executed for preaching the Gospel. So many high points that our Bible friends experienced – if only high point moments could last as Peter speaks for all of them: **“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”** (Mark 9:5).

Our Savior Jesus can sympathize with our “if only this could last” plight as he had to leave the mountain top, leave the company of good friends Moses and Elijah, leave the encouraging words of his Heavenly Father, and walk down the mountain to fulfill the promise he had made 6 days earlier: I must go to Jerusalem and **“suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law,...and be killed...”** (Mark 8:31). Even Jesus thought, “if only this time on the Mountain of Transfiguration could last...,” as not too long after this he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup (of suffering) from me...”** (Luke 22:42).

Our Savior Jesus had proper perspective about these earthly glory moments and the bigger eternal picture. The Gospel of Luke records for us that **“They (Jesus, Moses, and Elijah) spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem”** (Luke 9:31). Jesus knew he couldn’t stay on that mountain top. He still had the mission of saving the world to fulfill and the details of that mission did not include him staying on the mountain top to revel in that glorious moment. His mission included suffering Hell as the substitute of sinners like you and me. His mission included shedding his blood and dying on a cross so that sinners like you and me might enjoy the forgiveness for all of our sins. Jesus had to suffer and he had to die because that was the Father’s plan of salvation. And yes, Jesus wrestled with the thought, “If only the glory of the Mountain of Transfiguration could last...,” but when all was said and done he submitted to his Father’s plan – **“yet not my will, but yours be done”** (Luke 22:42). Jesus was willing to **“suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law,...and be killed...”** because it would lead to this victory for him and us – **“and after three days rise again”** (Mark 8:31). Jesus said **“In this world you will have trouble,”** and that included Jesus having trouble. But Jesus finished that statement by saying, **“But take heart! I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33).

Enjoy the Mountain of Transfiguration moments of your life, but don’t let them blind you from seeing the bigger eternal picture. Enjoy the Mountain of Transfiguration moments of your life, but when those moments are over don’t waste your time and energy lamenting “if only this could last.” Instead marvel at how our loving God uses every moment of life – glorious, normal, or difficult – in perfect balance. God gives us Mountain of Transfiguration moments in our life get us ready for the normal and difficult days of life ahead on earth. And the normal and difficult days of life help us appreciate the past undeserved joys of life and makes us look for its return in even greater measure than before when we are experiencing first hand and forever in what took place on the Mountain of Transfiguration. “If only this could last.” Because Christ came down the mountain to embrace the cross we have a future in Heaven that will last forever. Remember that as you deal with whatever glorious, normal, or difficult days God has planned for the rest of your life. Amen.