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“You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet!”

Text: Mark 9:2-9; 2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:6

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hang on! Buckle up. It’s going to be a wild ride today as we consider the Transfiguration of our Lord. We’re going to go from Genesis to Revelation, from the tabernacle to the transfiguration, from sin to glory, all in about 15 minutes or so. So here we go. Hang on.

In six days, God created the heavens and the earth. And it was all good. In fact, it couldn’t be any better. *It is good to be here*, Adam and Eve would have said.

And then sin. And the good was changed, and not for the better, as they had been promised. They had the best and they gave it up. Adam and Eve - could we say? - were transfigured. Innocence lost, the perfect image of God lost, paradise lost. And they knew they were naked and were ashamed.

Then their Father came to them, in mercy. Yes, there were consequences for their sin, but also mercy. And one of the merciful things He did was clothe them. Cover their shame. Yet at the same time, these clothes would be a constant reminder to them of their fall, their sin. How uncomfortable they must have been, at first. It was like this, in the beginning.

Fast forward, now, to that mountain where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John. That too - did you notice? - was *after six days*. And on that mountain the clothes that Jesus is wearing - clothes only necessary because of sin - are now quite different. In fact, Mark uses a word for them that is used *only here* in the entire New Testament, saying that Jesus’ clothes became *radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them*. They were otherworldly, we could say . . . *because of the one wearing them*. The clothes that were a reminder of sin and uncomfortable on Adam are clothes brilliant and radiant on the second Adam, the Son of God.

So what were they supposed to think, Peter, James, and John? Jesus hadn’t prepared them for this! It just happened, without warning. Their world, it seems, *invaded* - not only with this vision of radiance, but then also with visitors from heaven: Moses and Elijah. The Law and the prophets. The hymn we just sang spoke of them, and the second verse, which spoke of them, intrigued me. It said: *Trembling at His feet we saw Moses and Elijah speaking. All the prophets and the law Shout through them their joyous greeting* (LSB #415 v. 2). Joyous greeting. I had never imagined it that way before. Moses and Elijah happy and joyful with Jesus - not all serious and theological!

But that would help make sense of Peter's response. They're terrified, Mark tells us. He doesn't know what to say . . . *so why say anything?* But Moses and Elijah are rejoicing, so this is good. Good, yes. So we'll make three tents. Maybe, Peter thought, so he can go down and get the others and they can see it too. And maybe then bring all the world to see this sight. The Law and the prophets rejoicing in this One about whom they had been talking and pointing to and awaiting. All could see Jesus as they knew Him and knew He was - the Son of God, radiant, brilliant. It would be almost like a theme park. A spectacle. Because that's what we like in this world. Like rattling shiny keys in front of a baby.

But that idea doesn't last long, for then comes *the cloud*. Uh oh. When clouds move in you know the storm is on the way. But these are not storm clouds - this is the God cloud. The cloud of Mount Sinai, the cloud that led the people through the wilderness, the cloud that filled the tabernacle and the temple - the cloud that signals **God is here**, hiding, so He can be with you. Because if He didn't hide, then the terrified Peter, James, and John felt before? You ain't see nothin' yet! We cannot stand in God's direct and glorious presence and live. So God hides Himself, cloaks Himself, to be with us, for us; for our good. That cloud is for our protection.

And it *overshadows* them. That's a significant word, too - not used many time in the Bible. In fact, it is used in only two other places when not talking of this event. And one of those was when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her she was going to be a mother and have a son; that there's going to be a Jesus. And now His Father says: *this is My beloved Son*, Jesus - *listen to Him*. Stop blathering on about holy theme parks and open your ears.

And then it was over. . . . Or was it?

Fast forward now to St. Paul and his letter to the Corinthians. One thing Paul can always do is pack a whole lot of theology into just a few verses, and these are no exception. But there are two significant things he says here that I want to point out today. First, he talks about Moses. He says Moses *would put a veil over his face so the Israelites could not see what was coming to an end*. What was happening was that everytime Moses would go into the tabernacle, or the tent of meeting, to meet with God and speak to Him face-to-face, he would come out with his face glowing. But it wouldn't last. The glory of God glowing on him would fade. So he would put the veil over his face when he came out. Moses was the messenger, bringing the Word of God and its glory to the people.

But here's the important point - what Paul then goes on to say: *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*

Okay, unveiled faces - that's Moses going into the tent. WE now, Paul says, not just Moses - WE now have access to the tent, to God, in Jesus. For remember when Jesus was crucified? The *what* in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom? *The veil*. Because of Jesus' atonement, His blood, we have access to God. We don't have to have a Moses go in there for us and come out - we have access to God and His glory in Jesus. Just as Peter, James, and John witnessed on the mountain that day.

But what's the result of that? And here's what all this has been leading up to: **WE all**, Paul says, ***are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another***. And that word *transformed* - it's the same word used of what happened to Jesus. He was transformed, and now we are being transformed, transfigured.

Adam was transformed, too, remember? From glory into sin, from life to death, from paradise to toil, from fellowship to separation. Now we are being transfigured, transformed, back. In Jesus.

And transformed into what? The same image. The image of God Adam was created in but then fell from, we are being transformed back into - the image of Christ, who is the image of God. Jesus restoring to us what we lost in sin. Through His death and resurrection. Through the forgiveness of our sin.

That's why God doesn't want a holy theme park set up on the top of that mountain. It's not good enough for Jesus to be transfigured! He wants us to be transfigured too. He wants you to have that glory too. He wants us with Him like Moses and Elijah. And for that He came. To go to the cross. To take the fall with Adam and with us, that we get the glory with Him.

Mark said that Jesus ***led them up*** the mountain that day. That could also be translated that Jesus ***bore them up*** the mountain that day. Carried them. I like that. Because it's a picture of what Jesus did at that other mountain, called Calvary, where He **bore**, He carried, our sins on the cross, and will **bear** us to heaven with Him also.

So then, Paul goes on to say, ***having this ministry*** - this service of transformation for you - ***by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart***. In fact, quite the opposite! For this is not a ministry to the worthy and perfect who need no transfiguration. The purpose of this ministry, of the Church, of the Word and Sacraments, is the transfiguration of you and I from death to life, from falling to rising, from sin to glory. And that's what's happening here. In Baptism, new life, resurrection. In Absolution, forgiveness, cleansing, washing. In the Supper, Christ in us, His life in us, Body and Blood. In the Word, listening to Him. ***Transforming us*** into the image of Christ, ***from one degree of glory to another***.

Even if we don't always live like it. 'Cause we don't. 'Cause we too often conform to this world instead of being *transformed* by Christ (Romans 12:2 - same word!). 'Cause like Eve, we

fall for Satan's lies and deception. Like Adam, we remain silent when we should speak and listen - not to Christ - but to those who lure us into sin. We grab for what is forbidden 'cause we think we know better than God. Like Peter, we blather on instead of listening. We like the shiny and spectacular, we feel good more than the work, and grow dissatisfied and covet when our lives aren't turning out as we want. We doubt and we grumble, we judge but don't like to be judged, and about a million other ways we've invented to sin.

So take God's advice: *listen to Jesus*. Listen. And you know what you'll hear? *I forgive you all your sins. This is My Body, This is My Blood. The Lord bless you and keep you. Depart in peace*. And you do. For in Jesus you are at peace with God.

And so today we've come to the end of the Epiphany season. In Christmas we've seen God come in the flesh. During Epiphany we've seen this man, this flesh, is God. And on Wednesday we'll enter the season of Lent and see this God-man on the cross, taking our place, that we may be transfigured, changed, transformed. That we be sons of God with Him and in Him.

So today at the end of the service, we'll sing our good-bye to Alleluia (LSB #417). We'll mourn our sins - that's part of our transformation: dying to sin. And then we'll rejoice on Easter, when we break out in our Alleluias again, and look forward to the Day when it will be Easter for us all and once and for all. When we will rise and as Paul said in his first epistle to the Corinthians, *we will be changed* (1 Cor 15:52). The transfiguration complete. And Moses and Elijah will not come here - we'll go there. To that great multitude of Revelation, which no one can number, and clad in what? *White robes*, of course (Rev 7:9, 13)! And we'll never leave.

For as St. Paul concludes: ***For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," - in the beginning, in creation - has shone in our hearts - now! - to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God - not on the mount of Transfiguration, but here, now, - in the face of Jesus Christ.***

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.