

Matthew 17:1-9 Jesus Reveals His Light! Transfiguration Sunday February 26, 2017

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

God's Word to give us the light of understanding is written in Mathew 17:1-9

These are Your words heavenly Father to teach us to see Jesus through Your Word. Your Word is truth.

Dear Christian friends,

If you were looking for a lost object outside, would you rather look in the daylight or in the dark? Of course, you want see in the daylight! Then again, if you were trying to hide something, you'd prefer to hide it in the dark. Even though we're Christians, our sinful nature is tempting us to sin against God but do it in such a way that we think stays hidden. Also, people around us are sinning against God and they don't seem to be hurt by it. They question if God sees or cares about their sins. How sad, because a time will come when God's light will expose every sin and those without Christ will be condemned. But God wants us to be saved and He offers His own Son as the Light that can save us. If only we could more clearly see what harm our sins will cause us, we would quickly turn from them and hurry to Jesus' forgiveness! We thank God that

Jesus reveals His light!

First, Jesus is the only way to approach God. The brightness of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain must have been an awesome sight for the three disciples. But, Jesus wasn't the only source of light on the mountain. Matthew wrote, *"While [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified."* (v.5-6) The bright cloud and voice were from God the Father. God's radiant glory was hidden in the cloud. If they would have seen that His glory directly they would have instantly died. No wonder they hid their faces on the ground in terror!

This wasn't the first time that the brightness of God put fear into people. At Mt. Sinai, God called Moses to the mountaintop to receive the 10 Commandments. It states in Exodus 24, *"When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai.... To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain."* (v.15-17) To them, no one could survive the intense brightness that came from God. The same thing happened at the dedication of Solomon's temple. The Lord's cloud of glory filled the temple and the priests couldn't enter for fear of dying in God's presence. Also Isaiah in a vision was overwhelmed by the glory of God. Before God called him to be a prophet He gave Isaiah a vision of a heavenly temple with God's glory filling it. Immediately Isaiah confessed his sinfulness. But God sent an angel to announce forgiveness to Isaiah so that Isaiah could speak the light of God's Word to help save others.

God hasn't filled our church with His brightness to help us stand in awe of Him. If He appeared like that, all that would be left in here are bulletins flying in the air as people rush to leave! But He has come to us today in the light of His Word. He gave us His Commandments to teach us His perfect ways so that we know His will and do what He says not just outwardly but out of love for Him with a pure heart! But we know that we sin. And we can't hide them. Our conscience tells us that a day of reckoning is coming when God will make us give an account for their sins. If we are unprepared, we will face the wrath of a just and perfect God who will reveal every sinful word and thought and action. Without Christ, there will be no place to hide and no shelter from His penetrating light that leaves us with no excuse and will condemn us.

Jesus knew every aspect of God's law. He didn't rebel against it, He came to fulfill it! God's light daily scanned every one of Jesus' words, actions, and even His thoughts and motives. The light of God's law revealed no sin in Jesus. He was perfect. That's why when the bright cloud appeared on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus didn't hide. God said of Jesus, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*" (v.6) Jesus was following God's plan. The Bible states, "*God was pleased through [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*" (Colossians 1:19-20) God had sent Moses and Elijah to encourage Jesus to fulfill God's plan and take away the sins of the world. It was no coincidence that as Jesus paid for our sins on the cross He hung in darkness. But, His death put an end to the darkness of sin that condemns us and He puts us in a whole new light.

Second, Jesus' light is full of grace. How can we tell that Jesus' light was different that God's holy light? In some ways it was the same. Matthew wrote, "*[Jesus] was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*" (v.2) The light radiating from Jesus' face was His glory as the Son of God. He will be our source of light forever. Yet, His holiness was not overwhelming like the glory of the Father. It was hidden in His human nature so that through Him we can approach God. Think of the holiness God as radiation. If we are near it and not shielded from it, it will kill us. But, with the proper dose, radiation becomes a power to save us. So, Jesus' human nature covered the glory of God inside Him, so He could be the ultimate source of life for us. No wonder Peter said, "*It is good for us to be here.*" (v.4) Jesus was not using His glory to expose their sins. Seeing Him in that brightness, the disciples were certain that Jesus was the Son of God who had come to save them from their sins.

Through Jesus, the disciples got a glimpse of heaven. They saw Jesus' glorious body and Moses and Elijah alive "*talking with Jesus.*" (v.3). Peter was in awe of what He saw, but he had no fear. He wanted to stay longer and make shelters for each of these honored men. That was only the beginning of what the gracious light of Jesus would bring to him and to all who trust in Jesus to save them from sins. For Jesus is now ruling with God the Father over all things. He will come again in even more brightness than His first appearance on the mountain. You won't be able to miss Him on the day of His return! Every eye will see Him. Those who don't believe will seek caves to hide in but they'll have no place to hide. Those who believe will run to welcome Jesus as their Savior and they will instantly be changed into sinless people!

With Jesus as our Savior from sin, we can be sure of joining Him in heavenly brightness. Some day Jesus will return to end this world. He will create a new world with no sun for He will be its light. As God's people in heaven, we will not only see Jesus' majesty, we will reflect His light. Paul wrote, "*When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*" (Colossians 3:4) On the mountain, Jesus denied Peter's request to stay in the light, because Jesus hadn't finished His saving work. But after He paid the price for sin on the cross, rose from death and ascended to heaven, all is ready for us. When we die and our souls go to heaven, we will see Jesus in all His glory. We will live in His light forever.

So, seek God's light! It will expose our flimsy excuses for hiding our sins. But in Christ, we can tell God: "Bring it on!" As God's law scans our lives for sin, it will find nothing for by His "*grace and truth*" (John 1:14) Christ has taken away our sin. In Christ, nothing stands between us and heaven. Today we have gotten a glimpse of the glory that we will be ours. Praise God for His saving light in Christ! Amen.