

*Luke 9:28-36.*

*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup>Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. <sup>33</sup>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.) <sup>34</sup>While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." <sup>36</sup>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.*

**It is good for us to be here... but we can't stay.**

- 1. He went on for us.**
- 2. We go out for him.**

Isn't this great! Isn't this so nice that we are all gathered here today. God's Word is given to us. God speaks to us. He tells about his Son. He forgives our sins and we get to sing praises to him. Isn't it great that all these young people are here from St. John School? The church is nice and full. They are singing so well. We should just stay here. When we get tired we could dim the lights and curl up in the pews; the pews are padded after all. Isn't it great to be here! We should just stay here for days!

While worship is certainly one of the highlights of my week, I think more than a few of you might have a problem with that idea of staying here all day, or for days at a time. Eventually you will have to leave today. You have things to do. You can't just stay here, you have to go home, check in on things. You have responsibilities, things, chores, or livestock, or pets, or people that you have to take care of. Some of you have work or school tomorrow. Yes, it is good to be here! But we can't stay here. We have things that you have to take care of, things that you have to do.

Think of that scene on the top of that high hill. It must have been very peaceful when Peter, James, and John went with Jesus up that mountain to pray, but then things went from very nice to awesome. As Jesus prayed Peter and his friends were getting tired. They had walked up that high hill with Jesus, they had gotten away from the busy work of public ministry and when they had escaped the noise and bustle of the crowds in those peaceful moments the disciples had become very sleepy. But suddenly there were snapped out of their daze by an incredible display. *<sup>29</sup>As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup>Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>appeared in glorious*

***splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.***

They saw his glory. They saw the glory of the Son of God and suddenly Peter and the disciples were transformed from weary bystanders to alert admirers. They were star struck. We are told from different accounts that they were both terrified and excited. They saw his brilliant glory. His clothes and his faced shine with the brilliance of lightning. And Peter in his shock and awe tried to figure out what to say, and he probably spoke without really thinking, but the emotions of the moment compelled him to speak. And so out he blurted, ***“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.”*** Isn't this great! Isn't this so nice! ***It is good for us to be here!*** Peter exclaimed. Let's stay. Let's put up some tents, some shelters, and just stay here for a while. You can almost imagine Peter's mind rushing through that idea. *Elijah can stay over there. We can make a spot for Moses. We can put up a shelter for you, Jesus. I'm not quite sure where I am going to sleep, but we'll figure it out. This is just so great!*

But of course, they couldn't just stay. It was an awesome sight that a person would want to last; Peter, James, and John, saw the glory of God in the face of Christ. They saw Jesus in heavenly glory talking with two guys who would were all-stars of the Old Testament and whose souls had long ago been taken to heaven. Moses and Elijah and Jesus in the brilliant light of heavenly glory. This was awesome. It was thrilling, no doubt invigorating. But they couldn't stay, they had to move on from there.

Jesus had to suffer and die and rise from the dead. Remember how our lesson for today starts. ***About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.*** What did Jesus say a little over a week prior to this? Well, about 8 days ago he spoke these very words. ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”*** That was the very thing that Jesus had told Peter, James, and John and all the others was what had to happen; and he told them numerous times. That was even what Elijah and Moses were taking to Jesus about; his coming departure in Jerusalem that Jesus would bring about. Jesus wasn't simply going to Jerusalem, to be falsely tried and crucified as a powerless victim, Elijah and Moses knew that this was God's plan of salvation that the Messiah, that Jesus, was going to lay down his life for all sin. He was the Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice. They knew that this was what Jesus had been sent to earth to accomplish. All Scripture was pointing to it. Jesus' life was heading to this purpose since birth. Peter, James, John, and Jesus could not stay on top of this high hill they had to go on, Jesus had to go on, he had to go to the cross.

However, Peter in his excitement did get this much right, it was good for them to be there. These were moments of much needed encouragement for Jesus. Weary from his work as a preacher and teacher he came up this hill and was refreshed by time spent in prayer. He was also carrying that heavy weight of knowing that he was going to suffer. He knew the task ahead of him and was being prepared for that difficult journey to the cross. He would suffer more than anyone would ever suffer, and he would not simply carry his own burdens with him, but he would carry the guilt and sin of the whole world to the cross. And so it was good for Jesus to be on that hill. To have some time in prayer and then to reveal his glory, to receive encouragement from Moses and Elijah as they talked with him in glory. To let out and reveal the wonder and brilliance and power and glory that he had kept covered and veiled

throughout his life. This one time, to shine with that brilliance, to fully exude all his glory, would prepare him and encourage him as he would take on the horrible suffering and shame that was to come. An incredible display of heavenly glory would strengthen and encourage Jesus before his ultimate battle with death and hell.

And of course there was that voice again. The same voice that had ripped through the heavens and announced the favor of the Father at Jesus' baptism and sent him on his way and prepared Jesus for his public ministry; that same voice now ripped through the heavens. A cloud enveloped them and those who were there heard the voice of God the Father as it announced that this was indeed the chosen one of God. This was God's plan, and Jesus was the chosen one. How encouraging these words must have been for Jesus to hear! **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."** And then just like that the magnificent scene was over. Moses and Elijah were gone, and the disciples found Jesus alone. Jesus could not stay on that mountain. He had the work of salvation to accomplish, but he had been given glorious and heavenly encouragement to send him on his way.

Of course this was encouraging for the disciples as well. They wouldn't really understand how important this was at the time. But this happened for them, this is something that they would never forget, and Peter, James, and John saw it all. The friend that they would see whipped and covered with blood and shame and such deep humiliation, on this mountain, for these few glorious moments shone with the brilliance of heaven. The voice from heaven (which they may not have been around to hear at Jesus' baptism) was now there to encourage them. **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."**

This was a time of great encouragement for the disciples. Because remember what else Jesus said 8 days before this, he said that ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*** Peter and the disciples had a lovely glimpse of heaven. It was spectacular and wonderful. It was something that you never wanted to end. But they just couldn't stay up there either. God had plans for them as well. God had purpose for Peter, James, and John.

They would have to suffer. They would watch their friend die. But those who were eyewitnesses of his glory, would also be eyewitnesses of his suffering and death and resurrection. God had purpose for them. They would fear persecution, later feel persecution. They had to go and suffer. But they had to go on to share the message of salvation too. Peter, didn't know it yet, but he had a Pentecost sermon to preach. James and John would share the good news of Jesus with many others in Jerusalem and Judea and beyond. It was good for them to be on the top of that mountain, to see Christ's glory, but they couldn't just stay up there. They had a purpose in God's plan.

It is encouraging to be here. To hear God's Word. To sing his praises. To see his glory in the good news of Jesus. To receive his forgiveness in Word and Sacrament. It is nice to see the church so full of people, to have the children of St. John's with us, to hear them sing. But we can't stay here. He has a purpose for us. God has a purpose for each and every one of you. And it involves taking what we have seen and heard here and taking it with us. Sometimes we get in the habit of leaving our faith at church. We come, we hear some things, we learn some things, but then too often it is like we make a little shelter in our favorite pew and leave our faith hidden there until we come back to visit next week. Maybe we don't take it with us because we are embarrassed or afraid of what might happen to us out there if we did. Or

maybe we don't think we have much that we can do out there. We hear about the goodness of Christ and the glories of heaven and we just want to go there already. We sit in on a good funeral sermon and we just want to be in the glory of heaven, right now. Frustrated by the world, troubled by sin, made weary by age, we might wonder, ***"Can't I just stay here in worship or can't I just go and be with Jesus in heaven?"*** But God reminds us that we have a purpose. As long as we are here in this world we have been called to go out from this place and serve our LORD.

Peter himself would go on to write about the purpose that you and I have and it's probably not by coincidence that this eyewitness of the transfiguration uses the image of wonderful light to describe God bringing us to faith in Jesus. He writes, <sup>9</sup> ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*** <sup>10</sup> ***Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*** In his great mercy God has called us out of the darkness of sin and death, he wrestled us out of the grasp of the devil and all things dark and evil; and sinners who should certainly be struck down in the awesome presence of a brilliantly holy God have instead been graciously set aside to serve our God in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. In our sinfulness we did not chose God and so often we choose not to follow or listen to him, but still in his mercy God forgives us, and reminds us of his great love for us in Jesus. He encourages with the veiled brilliance of his Word. In this place of worship or another one like it, we are invited into to God's presence to see our glorious Savior and how in his wonderful love set aside his glory to take on our shame, our guilt, our sin. We are invited to come into God's presence and partake of his body and blood and receive the very forgiveness that he won for you and you. In this place, we are renewed and refreshed.

But we don't stay here. After being renewed by God's love we go out. We go back home, we go to work, we go to school, we go out and we live and fulfill those callings, whatever they might be to serve and follow Jesus in the way that we live our daily lives. Whether you are student or a retiree, a teacher, a pastor, a farmer, or an infant, or preschooler, you are here in this world for God's purpose. And because of the goodness of God we can come to a place like this, be refreshed and renewed and encouraged by the glory and love of God, and then we go out to fulfill those tasks and those roles that God has called us to. Whatever we do we can do it all for the glory of God. We are called to go out from this place so that we might serve and follow Jesus in the chores and tasks of everyday life, but also in the way that we speak about our glorious Savior, and in the way that we let his brilliant light shine through us in the way we live our faith and share our faith. As Christians we gladly are a reflection of Christ. Christ Jesus himself has told us that just as he is light of the world through faith in him we too are the light of the world.

It is good to be here, to be refreshed and renewed in the veiled brilliance of Word and Sacrament, but we can't stay here. We go out for him. God has a purpose for us. As you look upon Christ today in his brilliance and glory and in the weeks ahead as you climb with him to a very different hill, Mt Calvary, where he would die, remember that he does this all for you. He set aside his glory to redeem you, to set you free from sin and death, so that you might live for the him who would die for you and rise again. Know that he went on to the cross for you and then go out in peace and joy today shining with the brilliance of his glorious light. Amen.