

January 24, 2010

SOLI DEO GLORIA
Transfiguration

Good Shepherd, Novi

MATTHEW 17:1-9 / 2 PETER 1:16-21
LISTEN TO HIM.

In the name + of Jesus.

Christians always face a struggle, wanting to live by sight rather than by faith. We are like Peter, who stepped outside the boat onto the Sea of Galilee at Jesus' invitation. At Jesus' invitation, Peter heeded the word of the Lord and walked on water. But soon, faith gave way to sight. Peter saw the waves. Peter feared the sea. He did not trust the word of the Lord, but his senses. As a result, he sank. That is the way it is for us too. We abandon God's word, because we trust what we see.

Peter was a witness to another miracle of Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration. **His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Matthew 17:2,3)** Peter, James, and John were awestruck. Even though Jesus had given glimpses of his divinity through miracles, this was different. Here, the radiance of Jesus' divine glory shone through his clothes, in his flesh, and by the company of his sainted guests.

Peter, thrilled by the brilliance of Jesus and the prophets, declared, **"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."** (Matthew 17:4) Peter was in love with the glory he saw. He wanted to keep it. After all, this is what we all desire from our Lord. We want our lives to be glorious. We want our reputations to be renowned and our deeds praised. We want our wallets full and our health robust. We want our achievements to be brilliant and our friends to be many. If our God is glorious, shouldn't we be, too? Quit asking God to put up shelters so that you can dwell in glory. The glory is not here. If you insist on having glory in this age, you will not have glory in the age to come. Repent, and do not live by sight. Your eyes deceive you anyway.

While Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to have a glimpse of his divine glory, the apostles were to know that this was a momentary thing. Heaven was neither on the mountain, nor anywhere else on earth. They were not to seek such glory, because they were not going to find it. They would descend the mountain; and, once down the mountain, they would face sarcasm and scorn, hostility and humility, rejection and persecution, and bitter death.

They would not find glory; they would find a cross. Jesus would receive his cross, and they would receive theirs. You receive yours too. For, if you are a child of God, the world will hate you and mock you. If you are a child of God, you will do battle against your own sinful flesh. You still struggle against fear, against temptations, and against ridicule. Sin hounds you. The devil tempts you. Death taunts you. This is not glory. This is the cross.

Now, the cross is a good thing. God lays this cross on you so that you will not find any reason to take pride in yourself. He lays the cross on you to make you acutely aware of your weakness, your failings, and your emptiness. For, if you are weak, then you must look elsewhere for strength. If you fail, then you must turn to someone else for hope. If you are empty, then someone else must fill you up. If you recognize your helplessness

condition, then you will not view Jesus as a last resort. He is the only resort. Listen to him.

St. Peter wrote to his fellow Christians, recalling the divine glory that was revealed in Jesus at his transfiguration. While his glory was momentary, it was real. Peter assures us, **“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16) “We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.” (2 Peter 1:18)** While the vision was momentary, the word of the Lord endured. The voice is what resonated with the apostles: **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5)**

Yes, dear Christians, listen to him. For his word is more reliable than your senses. Your feelings change by the hour. You never see the whole picture. Your viewpoint is colored by your selfish motives. Your senses are unreliable and fickle. But the word of the Lord endures forever, and that word enables you to endure your troubles and trials now. So listen to him.

You did not see Jesus’ transfiguration. Neither have you seen Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. You have not seen heaven. You do not experience real glory. Therefore, Peter does not tell you what to look for, but what to listen to. St. Peter wrote, **“We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19)** We live by faith, not by sight. Faith comes by hearing; so listen to him!

We have the word... Pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place. (2 Peter 1:19) This world is a dark place; for it is evil. And that darkness tries to invade your heart and drive God’s light from you. That is why you question God’s love. You challenge God’s commandments. You wonder about your own goodness. You fear the loss of tangible blessings. You fear death. And when you take stock of your life in the quiet moments of the night, you can become convinced that you are not God’s beloved. How can you be, with all your guilt and with your life being all messed up? You believe what you see and feel – that you are still a sinner, that you are weak, and that you are not good enough.

Listen to him! God shines his light in your heart to drive out sin, to calm your fears, and to silence the nagging of the devil. God does not point you to yourself. He says, **“This is my Son, whom I love... Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5)** Listen to Jesus; for he has the words of eternal life. Jesus is the one who has taken your sin and guilt from you. He assures you that you are forgiven no matter how badly your guilt torments you. Do not listen to your guilt; listen to Jesus. Jesus is the one who covers you in his blood. This alone makes you holy and blameless before God, no matter how messed up your life seems. Do not trust appearances; listen to Jesus. Jesus is the one who is the Lord over death. He assures you that, since you are baptized into his name, you will rise from the grave to live forever. Do not be deceived by the frailty or failings of your body; listen to Jesus. And on the other end, if you feel like everything is going right for you, do not be enamored or deceived by such blessings. Do not equate God’s love with momentary blessings. Blessings are given; and blessings can be taken away; but the word of the Lord stands forever. God’s love is made known not by earthly blessings, but by the cross. God’s love is administered through the preached word and the blessed sacraments. That is where Jesus tells you to find comfort, hope, and salvation. So listen to him!

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed (his apostles), “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” (Matthew 17:9) Jesus wants us to know that we should not seek glory that lasts but a moment. Neither salvation nor comfort is found there. The glory you desire comes through the cross. Do not be deceived or disappointed by a life under the cross. Remember: Your life and your glory are hidden in Christ. As it was for Jesus, so it is for you: First the cross; then the resurrection, then the glory that will never fade or expire. That only comes through Jesus; so listen to him.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.