

The Glory of the Transfiguration

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 April 2018

Preacher: Rev. Calum Iain Macleod

[0 : 00] Well, shall we turn back together to Matthew 17? And we can read again in verse 5.

He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And a voice from the cloud said, This is my beloved Son.

With whom I am well pleased, listen to him. It's true to say that at certain points in our Lord's life and ministry, where on earth it was a time of what's called humiliation, it was way below his own dignity as the Son of God.

There were, nevertheless, times when great glory and magnificence were seen. There is glory in his humiliation.

Sounds maybe self-contradictory. Where humiliation is somewhat the opposite. Self-humbling and relinquishing of glory as not an essential quality, but as far as it's been seen as concerned.

[1 : 33] But for our Lord, it was one of these things, that though he was, Philippians 2 tells us, in the form of God, he didn't think being in equality with God, something that he wasn't prepared to temporarily relinquish.

By being in the form of God, he isn't referring there to his being God, but to his appearing to be God.

Though he was in the form of God, he thought it not robbery, the old Bible puts it, to be equal with God, but made himself nothing and took to himself the form of a servant.

Now that word, form of God and form of a servant, forms the basis, provides the basis for the word we have here in Matthew 17, to transfigured, metamorphosed.

There was a change in his appearance. Doesn't mean that he changed, but there was a change in his appearance. And just as it was the case with our Lord when he was in his earthly ministry, these three or so years towards the end of his time on earth, it's true as someone else has said that he laid aside the form of God and took the form of a servant, his humiliation.

[3 : 02] But that the time has come and will yet reach higher levels where having laid aside the form of a servant, he has taken back the form of God.

So the mind of transfiguration comes somewhat in the middle of that. Interestingly, we mentioned that there is glory in his humiliation.

There's shame, there's sorrow, there's suffering, there's so much that is well below our Lord's dignity as the Son of God. But you remember that he says in terms of reference to the cross, now, now is the Son of Man glorified.

How and what? Well, it would appear that when our Lord is speaking about the cross, he sees the cross as the way to his glory, the means, the stepping stone, as it were, towards the crown.

And so connected is the cross to the crown that he views the cross as part of the glorification itself.

[4 : 09] They're inseparable. The transfiguration here is something that is filled with mystery and we don't pretend to fully or anything like fully understand it.

But it would appear that there are things before us that we hope will be beneficial as we try and fix our thoughts and our hearts upon the Lord. Particularly, as we know from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, that we are to be laying aside every weight, the sin that so easily ensnares us, to be looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

What was the joy that was set before him? You know what it's like in your own situations, how having a prospect can really change the way you go through something, something difficult.

If you know there's an end in view, it makes it somewhat easier to keep going. There's no prospect and you can't see the end in view. Sometimes you feel so much different.

But there are reasons, and hopefully we'll see this as we try looking through this, reasons not only for our Lord himself, as far as the purpose of the transfiguration is concerned, reasons also likely for Moses and Elijah, and also for Peter, James, and John.

[5 : 40] Peter is central to this, as we tried seeing yesterday. And Peter is one of the 12 that we can maybe identify with more than the others. So we try looking this morning, and just by asking a number of questions, preparing ourselves and our thoughts to try coming to the Lord's table.

The first thing is to ask the question, what? Well, what is happening? We know it is a transfiguration, but what exactly does that involve? Well, it's involving our Lord making himself known to his, three of his disciples in a way that is unique for them and in a way that is special for them.

We saw yesterday that our Lord is beginning in Matthew 16 to reveal himself, to share his self-identity with the disciples. Remember he asked the question, who do people say I am? And they said, some say you're Elijah, some say Jeremiah, some say this, some say that. And then he says, but who do you say that I am? And then Peter makes that declaration.

And on the back of that, our Lord goes on to explain and reveal and teach about his work, his person and his work. And here in chapter 17, there's something more of a disclosure the Lord is making, revealing his identity to them, coming as it does on the back of what we read at the end of chapter 16, where the Lord is saying in verse 27, that's chapter 16, having stressed the obligation and stressed the responsibility and the cross-bearing involved in being a Christian, he lifts their eyes to what's coming ahead of them.

[7 : 19] Yes, in this world, as he says elsewhere, you will have trouble, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. But this, for the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. And then six days elapse, then the transfiguration.

What's the connection, if any? Well, surely the connection is that the transfiguration where the Lord reveals something of his glory to Peter, James, and John, he is beginning to reveal to them in maybe the form of a promise or a prophetic picture of sorts that the kingdom is actually coming. You put yourself and me with you in this situation. Isn't it true that as Christians there are things that we believe without any question, no shadow of doubt, the second coming being one of them. But do you ever get up one day and expect it?

Or even if you do on whatever day or whatever time it is, expect it. Do you ever find yourself in a way that you can somewhat visualize or kind of put yourself in the position where you would imagine that event taking place?

[8 : 37] It's so difficult, isn't it? There are some things we believe but we can't quite realize. The implications, the reality, the extent of the things we believe escapes us so much and there's reasons for that.

We'll come back to that God willing when we come to that point at the table. There are spiritual realities that are of a nature that would, where they revealed and unfolded to us to the degree we'd sometimes want, be too much for us.

We just couldn't cope. We couldn't function. People make this kind of statement. You've maybe said it yourself at one point. They're so heavenly minded that are of no earthly use.

Now, one sense, that's an impossibility in one sense. In the sense that the more heavenly minded we are, the more useful we'll be. But there is another sense in which, while not what's actually being referred to, there is a sense where heavenly mindedness, things of God, things that are coming, the reality of God himself can be so oppressive, so weighty, that it can render us unfit for anything.

But there is a particular reason, maybe many reasons, why the Lord chooses, not just to be transfigured, but for why he chooses to be transfigured with Peter and James and John.

[10 : 03] You may be asked the questions, the second thing, we ask who? First is what? Well, the transfiguration, we'll come back then in just a minute. But who is there? Our Lord, we're told, he takes after six days, Peter, James, and John, his brother.

Why not take the whole 12 of them? Or if you took Judas out of the equation, why not take 11? Or why not take any other number apart from three? And there are different reasons suggested as to why that's the case.

Well, Peter, we saw yesterday, he is going to be foundational in the church anyway. He's going to be very influential. And we'll read before we finish if we have time what he says in 2 Peter 1 about this very experience.

He never forgot it. Peter never got over what he saw and he has an understanding and an insight and a grasp of it later on in his life. It's one of these things that the Lord's showing him his glory. Peter never forgot what he saw. It left a mark on him. These are blessed times in your life and mine, aren't they? These times with God that God leaves a mark on us. We don't forget some of the blessings we get.

[11:07] We pray for more of these things. Peter was going to be so influential. James and John, well, they themselves were going to be influential. John was going to outlive the rest.

He was going to have that privilege of being the means of revealing to the church and the world the last revelation from heaven. The book of Revelation. Christ's final word of revelation to the church. until he comes the second time. Well, what about James? Well, James, the book of Acts shows us was going to be the first of the apostles to be martyred. There may be many other reasons, but these things we know.

Peter, as chapter 16 stresses, is going to be foundational, influential, and very significant in the founding of the New Testament church. That James, his brother, is going to be the first of the apostles to die for the Lord and John is going to have the privilege of being the author of Revelation, the human author, and he's going to live so long and experience so much.

To put that another way, it is preparatory for the role and position these men are going to fill in the church. I know none of God's providences are wasted on you or wasted on me.

[12:25] Well, in the sense, not in the sense of that we always make the best use of them, but in the sense that the Lord teaches us, yes, for the present, but maybe more often some of his providences and some of his teaching of us has more of a bearing on what's ahead of us.

It's to prepare us. Well, as well, you think of it, and this is just by the way, we know Peter, James and John, that these are the three the Lord chose to give what we'd call nicknames to.

Peter was Simon, son of John. He was nicknamed Peter by the Lord. It was prophetic. Our Lord called James and John, and isn't John so often brought before us in this effeminate kind of light? Any work of art, not all, but some, would picture John, the apostle of love, as some soft, effeminate-looking kind of character.

Well, what did the Lord refer to them? James and John are later called, elsewhere called, Boanerges. They're called the sons of thunder. There's nothing soft about these men. Nothing soft.

[13:35] That doesn't mean that love and masculinity are opposites or that emotion and masculinity. No, it's the picture people sometimes create, even of our Lord, is so way below, even the dignity of a man.

No, these were men who the Lord was going to use very, very significantly. He also took these three alone to Jairus' daughter's restoration. Remember that?

And at Gethsemane, Peter, James, and John, they were taken. The Lord is blessing them with a view to preparing them for what's coming. And you might think sometimes, and I might think with you, why is it that certain things are happening in our lives?

Even our mistakes, let's be honest. Peter's threefold denial of Jesus later on, as it's recorded for us at the end of the Gospel accounts, that itself was, while a tremendous public failure, it was going to be key and significant and influential in the preparation of Peter for fulfilling the role the Lord had for him.

Yes, even our sins, this is not an excuse and you know it's not meant to be, even our sins can by God be overruled and become used for our good.

[14:54] Let's not try and figure that one out. All things work together for good. To them that love God who are the called according to his purpose. And Peter's life, you see Peter's sin and I see it with you.

Peter's sin, which was animated and motivated by pride and self-assurance, you know, he was, he knew what he had to do and what he had to say and what he had to be in his own head.

He got it wrong. Broke him in pieces. The Lord put him back together and sent him out. He was never the same after that and you won't be and I won't be. So let's in God's providence when he brings us places, sends us things and even times of blessing, even times where we have fellowship with him and communion with him and let's enjoy these moments, let's pray for more of them.

But when we're in them we can also think, well maybe, when it's somewhat out of the ordinary, maybe the Lord is preparing me for something, for service, for suffering.

What a wonderful teacher we have. He takes with him Peter, James and John. But notice where they are in the third place. After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

[16:11] You know the way the world will do things and the way our own hearts will do things, if we're going to make a show, well everyone's going to see it. You know that kind of thing just infects the church as well.

You need to have the ego to go with it. You need to have this, you need to have that. It's all about self-promotion and self-declaration and self-assertion. Our children are told, not that you don't want a child to develop and mature and excel and where their own gifts lie and I'm not denying that at all. But where it's becoming all about you and all about them and be the best you can and all the rest of it, even if and when that involves standing on other people to get to where you've got to go.

It's all about me and me and self and look at me and I'm and I agree. You see, if anyone had any right, if anyone had any right to stand on his own rights, assert his own dignity and authority, it was Jesus.

This is the wonder of it and Philippians 2 in a context where there's one apparent problem or obvious problem in the church at Philippi where two of the women are just not seeing eye to eye.

[17:22] We don't know exactly what it was. We know they're not agreeing. We don't know why they're not agreeing. But Paul is writing and saying to agree. The problem is they're insisting on their own position or their own views or whatever the details.

And into that very practical though very disruptive context, Paul brings the picture of our Lord's self-humbling. His self-humbling and uses our Lord, although he was in the form of God, didn't think his equality with God something to be grasped.

He made himself of no reputation and so on and so forth. Glorious words. He brings that to bear in a practical instance and he's saying, look, if the Son of God being in the form of God was prepared to forego his own rights for your sake, well, what should you do for one another?

Shouldn't you at least do the same? Our Lord was able in knowing who he was to conceal the disclosure of that identity.

That's amazing, really, when you think about it. He's so not like us. You know, people just want to swagger down and just want everyone to look at them, everyone to admire them, everyone to talk about them.

[18:41] The Lord had every right and he still has. I know, Philippians 2 goes on to say that. Wherefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, every tongue confess to things in heaven and earth and under the earth that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

He had every right but he's prepared to forego it. So that's why he takes three of them. He takes them up on a mountain and it would appear, you may want to think more about this, the parallel accounts would maybe highlight, that the fact that coming down from the mountain, Luke says, happens on the next day, this may have happened at night.

Very significant. Away from everyone, up on a mountain, possibly, under the cover of darkness. Not only that, Peter, James, and John, Luke tells us that they're tired with their journey up on this mountain and they're so tired with their journey that they fall asleep.

They're amazing. Gethsemane as well, what happens with them? They fall asleep. Three times the Lord comes and speaks to them. They fall asleep. It sounds familiar, doesn't it?

At times where we may receive the greatest blessings in our lives, we may be sound asleep. There's reasons, please, don't misunderstand that.

[20:12] They've just climbed a mountain. They needed, in one sense, you could argue they needed sleep. Well, yes, what about Elijah and his depression and his sunkeness of spirit and his despondency and his distorted view of reality?

What was the problem? He needed sleep. He needed food. He needed his body to be put back in line, back on track, and then he would be spiritually ready for what lay ahead. But it would appear that in this context, the problem is they're missing out.

But that isn't by chance. It's not by chance either. Because there may very well be a sense that Peter, James, and John wouldn't have coped with the full disclosure of what's happening.

Have a look at Luke, the parallel accounts, and see, pull the things, the accounts together if you get a chance later on, just to see what they all say together. Because as you look at Matthew, you have the picture that the Lord takes them up, they're looking at him, he begins to shine like the sun, and then a cloud comes, and then the Father speaks from the cloud, and then that passes away when they're terrified, the Lord comforts them, and then they go back down.

It's more along the lines when you bring Luke to bear on it, that they were tired with it going up the mountain with everything else going on, and being asleep, they come around, and coming around, they see Moses and Elijah leaving.

[21 : 34] They don't hear the conversation according to Luke. They probably wouldn't have coped with it. What do you mean they couldn't have coped with it? We'll see how it says in verse 23 here in chapter 17, the Lord is saying they will kill him, and he'll be raised on the third day, and they were greatly distressed.

They couldn't cope with it. But isn't it amazing that Peter had the response that he did on seeing Moses and Elijah and the cloud coming?

It's good for us to be here, he said. It's good for us to be here. So there's Peter, James, and John up on this mountain. What exactly happens?

Verse 2. Again, Luke says, while he was praying, he was transfigured before them.

Metamorphosed. He didn't change in the substance or essence of his body. That would come along after his resurrection. His body would have qualities it didn't have beforehand. This is something of a prophecy or a foretelling of the glory that is coming.

[22 : 49] Yes, revealing his identity and also revealing what is coming. That he is coming. 16, verse 27. He is going to come in the glory of his Father. This is coming and this is a taste of it for him and it is a foreshadowing for them.

He was, Matthew says, transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white as light.

Now you know that there is a faint, faint, well not even a parallel but something that approaches one with what happened to Moses in the Old Testament about Sinai. But with Moses it was a reflection. It was the glory and the brightness, the radiance and what's amazing about this, if you want to look tying Acts 7 into this, that the one Moses saw on the mountain is the one Moses came to see on this mountain.

It was the Son of God. It was that God appearance in the Old Testament of the Son of God. The glory that was seen. That visible, radiant, shining, bright, sun-like, emanation and outshining.

[23 : 57] The brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person. That had an effect on Moses' face that it was reflective. It was like, you know, the effect of a mirror except, well, the mirror, it's only going to be there while the light is shining on it with Moses.

It gradually faded after the light was no longer shining. With our Lord, it isn't a reflection. It's not that which reflects us coming from outside. This is something that is shining from within.

We think and talk about the glory of God. We don't understand it. But one quality that comes through the Bible as a recurring theme is that reference to light.

God is light. He dwells in light that no one can approach unto and there are other ideas associated with that. But when we think about the glory of God and when we think about what we one day as Christian people will see, as we will one day see the glory of the Son of God, what will we see? Well, we don't know. But one of these things that recurs is this element of light. you try looking at the sun and of course it is blinding. It is impossible to actually look with the naked eye.

[25 : 10] But such was the brightness that shone from within our Lord that his clothes are swell. Remember the veil could conceal the reflection on Moses' face. The clothes on our Lord's body were themselves changed.

They were permeated with his light. His clothes became white as light. The parallel gospels say it's whiter than any clothes could ever be made white. No human means of whitening clothes could make clothes as white as our Lord's wear on this instance.

What is this all about? Well, surely it is as we're trying to say thinking of our Lord on his way to the cross. They don't understand what's coming. They're not prepared to take on board that he's going to the cross.

Peter rebuked him and said, Lord, this will never happen to you. He's going through the trauma of teaching his disciples and bringing them to accept something they're unprepared to take on board

because it doesn't fit in with their messianic ideal.

But here he is giving to Peter, James and John a prophetic, a foreshadowing and that's all it is of the glory that is coming one day. But it has to come by means of the cross.

[26 : 18] And you think about this as well. Our Lord is in his humiliation. He's in that state of being the servant of the Lord, the suffering servant. He hasn't yet risen.

He hasn't yet ascended and been seen at the right hand of the Father and as such the glory we're seeing here, the brightness, the shining, the radiance is but a small, small aspect of what is true of him now.

But it's real nonetheless. But notice, very interesting, again bring the parallel of Luke into this, is that when we're told Moses and Elijah appeared, we're told that they appeared in glory.

That's Luke's account. What's the significance there? Well, it's maybe akin to what happens in Act 7 with the death of Stephen. The deacon Stephen who, preaching a very, very, very full and expository and challenging convicting sermon, is executed.

It's the audience, the Jews, just, they're raging with him, gnashing their teeth and they stone him to death. While he's being stoned to death, he says, does he not, I see heaven open. And he says he saw or was seeing the glory of God and Jesus standing.

[27 : 40] What is that saying to us? Well, I suppose we ask the question, where is heaven? Do the children not ask us these kind of questions? Not only the children, we ask ourselves these questions.

At Stephen's death or the Mount of Transfiguration, as Luke describes it, heaven appears. Not saying that the place moves or any localizing of that reality, not at all.

We know Paul speaks about his experience in the third heaven as that where he was in the presence of God and in that unique sense where, well, there is the Jewish mindset, there is the beyond the universe, that realm, that the third heavens.

Be that as it may, we don't really understand. But what we do know is that on this occasion, not only do Moses and Elijah come, but they appear, that Luke tells us, in glory.

And when Stephen dies, Jesus comes to welcome him home. He doesn't just come as it were and appear in front of him. He says, I see heaven opened. Jesus' body, his human body, with all of its limitations, is right there in front of him.

[28 : 47] I see heaven opened, he says. I see the glory of God while he's being put to death. And I see Jesus standing while heaven, glory, was right there.

And Moses and Elijah just appear. Now you know very well Moses and Elijah represent both the law and the prophets. But isn't it amazing that they have no question about who Jesus is?

We kind of take a step back from that and think about heaven. It's very difficult for us. Moses and Elijah are sent. Elijah, we can understand, he ascended without having passed through death. Moses died. The Lord buried him. But here he is alongside Elijah. Was he embodied for that moment?

For to lay that body aside again? Was it a body for the time being? Or was it just the appearance of a body? You may want to think more about that and there's reasons either way of these discussions.

[29 : 51] Very interesting in their own right. But Moses speaking of the law, Elijah speaking of the prophets, maybe other reasons as well. But both these, law and prophets, find their fulfillment in Christ.

And again, bringing Luke into this. Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about the exodus. It's literally the exodus that he is going to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Isn't that full of meaning? The law, the exodus, book of exodus, the exodus from Egypt, the Passover, Corinth, first Corinthians, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.

The imagery is so full and abundant that Moses and Elijah have come from heaven with full understanding, well relative to the fullness of what Christ is going to do.

they have a sufficient understanding to come and talk to him about this. So in other words, they've learned about it in heaven. Greater understanding than they'd have had when they were on earth.

[30 : 56] Moses who was denied access to the promised land before he died because of his fit of anger, well here he is in the promised land. And here he is coming from heaven to the promised land to speak to the son of God along with Elijah about the exodus he's going to accomplish.

The encouragement, the joy that was set before Christ. You know, the language is so precise. It's not the death he was, it is the death he was going to die but that's not what Luke says.

It's not just the death he was going to experience, it's the exodus he was going to accomplish. So when our Lord before he actually dies says in John's account, it is finished.

He makes a declaration about a reality that is yet to actually take place but he speaks of it as though it has taken place already. It's going to happen. And our Lord is going through the trauma, the emotional trauma, he's going to come through the spiritual, the physical trauma as the weight of the cross, the shadow, the shadow of Calvary bearing down on him on his way to that cross at Calvary is going to become more and more real and while it would have been preparatory for Peter, James and John to have seen Jesus in this transfiguration, also we would argue for Jesus himself. This would have been significant and this would have been key and very important for him on his way to the cross. I mean he was, we know, the son of God. We don't understand very, we understand very little of the relationship within his own person between his being the eternal son of God and being man but we know as he's brought before us that he is not man sometimes and God at other times, he is a person and all he says and does, he does as a person nevertheless.

[32 : 49] He had feelings, joy and sorrow, he had thoughts. He needed friendship, Peter, James and John and John within the three was special to him.

He needed encouragement. After the temptation, the angels ministered to him. When he was in the trauma of Gethsemane, an angel came and ministered to him. He needs that.

It's hard to understand. We think, the son of God, well he needed nothing and no one. Well because he was in the form of a servant and laying aside the form of God in that capacity, he took that position of weakness and dependence where he needed and he received strength, assurance.

We see him going to the cross, the father encouraging him as Peter coming around sees what's going on. Lord, he says in verse 4, here's Peter again, isn't it? It's always Peter he's going to talk.

Lord, it's good that we're here. If you wish, I'll make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. And again, the parallel account explains that Peter said what he said not knowing what he was saying.

[33 : 54] You know, we're like that. I don't know what to say so we just come out with anything. What have I just said? Well, Peter's doing that over and over again in his life. But as Peter's speaking, this bright cloud overshadows.

Think about the terminology, a bright cloud overshadowing. Again, the parallel brings us to see that it isn't just this cloud above them but they were afraid as they went into the cloud.

What is the cloud? Our Lord is being told by Moses and Elijah encouraged about the exodus he's going to accomplish. The exodus, the journey out of Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land, the accompanying presence of God, the visible symbol of the presence of God, pillar of cloud by day, fire by night, on Sinai and all throughout their journeys.

Here is that manifestation of the presence of God in this instance of the Father. As Peter's talking, and as they enter the cloud as it comes over them, this voice thunders from the cloud, this is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased, listen to him.

Who's the father talking to? Well, who's doing the talking? Peter. Lord, we make a tent for you and for Moses and for Elijah and the father says, this is my son.

[35 : 15] What is he meaning? Well, surely, Peter's putting the three of them on something of an equal level. See, we try and grasp where Lord is saying here, they are not the same. He's revealing in chapter 16, he is the Christ, the son of the living God.

The father is saying to Peter, Peter, do not put my son on the same level with Moses and Elijah. He is my beloved son. Moses, Elijah, they're not in that same position.

I am well pleased with my son. What reassurance for our Lord. Didn't he hear this at his baptism? Doesn't he hear it here at his transfiguration? That is what our Lord needed.

That word of the father from heaven. You are my beloved son in effect with whom I am well pleased. Well, what a silencing that was for Peter.

A wonderful thing when God brings us to a place where we stop talking. Where we think we know what we're talking about when we haven't a clue. And we're left worshipping.

[36 : 17] What happens as they enter the cloud verse 6 as well. When the disciples heard this they fell on their faces and were terrified. When were you last like that? When was I last like that?

Does that characterize our worship? We're nearly finished. Does that characterize the worship in your own heart and life? Are you scared of God?

You know the very reality of God in his glory? The very hearing of the voice of the Father.

I mean this was Mount Sinai Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah. Wasn't Elijah brought to the same mountain in his own life experience that Moses had been on?

Wasn't he taken into that place and hidden by the Lord as the Lord passed by in the fire and the earthquake and the whirlwind? Yes.

[37 : 16] Mountains glory of God revealed. Mountain glory of God revealed. What's the effect? They're filled with awe.

They're filled with fear. They're filled with worship and they're left for the rest of their lives after having met with God unable to think of God in any minimizing or demeaning way. If God leaves a mark on you or leaves a mark on me it'll always be like that.

And one thing that characterized the worship in the early church the book of Acts is full. One thing that characterized the way they lived and worshipped was the fear of God. The fear of God not the sense of living you know fear of man and people with these structures and traditions all of these things that you've got to fit in a box and if you don't then you're in for it.

No. The awareness of the presence of God the glorious reality of God had a weight a significance a heaviness that left them afraid.

But it wasn't a fear like Adam and Eve in Eden had Genesis 3 when they wanted to run. It's one that brings us. It brings us to our knees it brings us to worship. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased.

[38 : 27] Listen to him. They were terrified they fell on their faces but Jesus came touched them and said rise have no fear. when they lifted their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only.

Why did this happen? Well for Peter, James and John it happened also for the sake of our Lord. But there's a sense where it happened also for Elijah and for Moses.

What a privilege. You know there's so many things just so many things involved in these words.

You think about heaven the knowledge within heaven knowledge in heaven of what's happening on earth.

Recognition of those in heaven when they appear on earth and things like that there's so much. But for us for you and for me today to have we have we with John writing his gospel have we come to the place where we can say ourselves we have seen his glory.

Glory is of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. You think well hang on a minute how could I have seen the glory if he is no longer here on earth? Well remember what Peter says whom having not seen you love.

[39 : 48] And in Psalm 63 the psalmist is talking in 27 about seeing the glory and the beauty of the Lord in his house. Does that make sense?

It does doesn't it? the reality of the Christ in the Bible on his way to the cross he is given this foretelling this prophetic this descriptive this reassuring phase experience for himself for them and for you and for me as well.

When you look at it does your heart yearn? Did you find anything within your heart longing for a sight? We're going to see in just a minute what Moses said in Exodus where he said Lord please show me show me your glory.

The transfiguration I hope you can see friends and be with you that this is something that our Lord was given with a view to the cross.

The joy that was set before him. the message from Moses and Elijah was the cross. For Peter James and John they couldn't yet understand the cross it's coming but they would understand the cross in light of the transfiguration.

[41 : 09] But we'll see in just a minute for you and for me there is masses of promise and today being here this is a stepping stone this is an experience this is a point in our lives that is going to have a bearing on the future it's going to have a bearing on our futures in this life going to have a bearing on the future and the life to come.

God grant to us even for these moments that we'd be able to see something something by faith through the word and the sacrament of what they saw on this mountain.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. We do thank you Lord for the astonishing way that you can silence us and you can fill us with wonder and awe and amazement.

We pray these times together as we gather around your word and sacrament that you would reveal yourself to us that as we're coming to remember Jesus we pray to remember him in the revelation he made of himself to us so often we just try to think about though not wrongly we just think about his death but Lord did you not say do this in remembrance of me it is you we want to remember please reveal yourself to us in the word by the Holy Spirit fill our hearts fill our minds fill our whole selves with the reality of your glory as far as we can take that in and as far as we can worship and absorb that as it were into our lives be with us these few moments we ask in Jesus name Amen just as we move on to coming to the Lord's supper just one or two words you know we call this the fencing of the table it's one of these things that's a bit of a well taboo in some places you don't want to talk about it you don't want to do it but it's one of these things that if we understand first Corinthians 11 right

God himself did in the early church where people were coming to the Lord's table who shouldn't have been professing Christians even think about that who were abusing the bread and the wine and they were consuming it ending up drunk and just full first Corinthians 11 makes it very clear the Lord the Lord was very displeased and because people were abusing the elements they weren't recognizing the Lord's body the Lord afflicted some with sickness and with others well he took them away but they were Christians and we know that because he said not only that some are weak and sick but others sleep and sleep is a word used to describe the death of Christians in the Bible so think about that God was putting that fence around the table and he was saying you shouldn't be here and others well yes and the first Corinthians 11 second part of the chapter is stressing the qualifications conditions on which we should come well recognizing the Lord's body having examined ourselves and that is why it's very helpful to have preparatory services people think oh this is all just tradition and you know well you might look in the Bible and say no we don't see preparatory services for them coming to communion nor do we like they meet in a home and have a fellowship meal at the end of which we have the Lord's supper that doesn't mean that what we do is wrong but that in fact the principles involved in the warrant we have first Corinthians 11 for the [44 : 58] Lord's supper self-examination discerning the Lord's body all of these things have their role not not taken from us individually but they have a function in these preparatory kind of services but as far as looking at ourselves today there's one thing one thing that's very very troubling I don't know you maybe do yourself one thing that's very troubling is where professing Christians cope for a lot of their lives without being in church I don't know so I have the benefit of saying this without knowing your situation there are places I know this there are places and everywhere where people will start becoming more diligent in church attendance before the communions it's crazy you think of that mentality we should have Peter's mind verse 4 of chapter 17 Matthew there Peter said to Jesus Lord it is good that we are here the house of God meeting with the Lord meeting with his word meeting with his people what place does it have in your life the problem we face so often these days is that our

Christianity and our Christ is something of a supplement to our lives it's just an add-on we don't know what this is a generalization I'm not saying about you I don't mean this at all but the meaning in general in the sense of people who can just have this kind of cool hip add-on of Christianity or Jesus doesn't mean your life has to change very much it's very foreign to what Paul says when he writes to the Philippians that for me to live is Christ and to die is gain Christ isn't some kind of add-on he isn't something that kind of qualifies his life and makes him fit in with certain people sometimes and leaves him free to fit in with other people other times when in Rome do as the Romans do kind of thing no and nor can we make an excuse out of becoming all things to all men that by any means we may min some out of being compromised and inconsistent no where our hearts are right with God we will long to be with

God's people we will long to be in God's house we will not need to be told though it's always good to be told what the Hebrews were told about not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is they were doing that in the early church they weren't bothering coming to church that is spiritually harmful it's a bad sign that people just turn up now and then can we qualify that I can maybe hear it and maybe yes you're right to think this what about having children what about having work what about having that's another matter I have that situation young family work commitments people can't always through their circumstances be there that is not what we're saying where you or I have no going to and you look in at the elders and it's easy for you to say this you have to be there well yes you can throw that at us but you know at the same time we have to

examine all of our own hearts so that we want to be there that the duty is a desire and a longing and hopefully it is but where there's no reason for us not to be in God's house do we long to be there or where we can't be there do we long to be there how lovely is thy dwelling place my heart and flesh long for thy tabernacles that's how we feel Peter's saying that Lord it is good that we are here let's make three tents one for you one for Moses and one for Elijah yes Peter didn't know what he was talking about but the spirit of what he said was right wasn't it I want to be with you in this place forever we can't dissociate or separate the house of God from God and that's what makes God's house so wonderful for us coming to the Lord's table let's ask ourselves can I say with the psalmist I love the place where your honor dwells I joy going up to the house of the Lord I don't need anyone to be on my case and saying why are you not in church no one needs to say that to me that's what I want to be my heart longs for God and meeting with him in his house or is this all just an add-on you back slid in things cool off and well I better go out of duty but am I here because I want to be will the Lord help us that we would be here out of longing and looking for himself not just to turn up not just to make sure our place isn't empty not just to stop people from talking and thinking there's something wrong with us but because we want to be even if no one else was going to turn up well that's stretching it a bit but even if no one else was going to turn up the very fact that the Lord is in this place we would want to be there ourselves may the Lord grant that to us may he bless us as we come to his table with that awareness of his presence here with us at this point we're going to sing from Psalm 118 and just to invite any to come forward to the table at this point to our intending communicants put it sing Psalm 118