

Transfiguration of Jesus

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[0:00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So in our scriptural text for this morning, both our Old Testament lesson and our Gospel lesson,!

You see a couple of instances where people see a reflection of the intense light of the glory of God, and ultimately find themselves afraid.

Now I have to confess that popular culture has kind of shaped the way I think about texts like these. Anyone else remember that climactic final scene in the film Raiders of the Last Ark? Yeah, you know where this is going. So the Nazis, having captured the Ark of the Covenant, decide that they're going to open it up, right?

Well, they get more than they bargained for. Soon light and fire starts pouring forth from the Ark, and those Nazis get their faces melted off.

[1:14] They didn't realize just how unsafe what they're dealing with really is. Now to switch from this Steven Spielberg classic to something that's more firmly biblical, in both our Old Testament and our Gospel lessons for this morning, we see people reacting in fear for the presence of the glory of the Lord.

And why is that? You know, that might seem unusual to us. Well, do you think it could be that maybe we tend to think of the Lord as safe?

That we think of the glory of the Lord as safe. But is it really? To quote C.S. Lewis somewhat out of context, the Lord isn't safe, but he is good.

His glory isn't safe, but it's good. Now think for a second about what happened prior to the events in our Gospel verses appointed for this morning in Luke 9.

So, Jesus asks his disciples who men say that he is, and they answer that men seem to think he is John the Baptist or Elijah, one of the prophets of old.

[2:36] But when he asks his disciples who they think he is, Simon Peter answers, the Christ of God. That's Peter's answer. You're the Savior, you're the Messiah, you're the promised one.

You're more than the prophet that men say that you are. But notice what Jesus tells his disciples in response, starting in verses 21 and 22.

He strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Well, we are not in the realm of safe, are we? We're in the realm of elders, chief priests, and scribes being confronted by one who is perfectly holy, and reacting in anger by turning him over to be killed. We're not in the realm of safe when the Christ of God, as Peter rightly confessed him to be, goes obediently to his death. And not so that death can defeat him, but so that he can defeat death by dying, and by rising again.

[3:58] Nothing safe about that. And the disciples see just how unsafe all of this really is in our gospel verses appointed for this morning.

They see what it means when we say that Jesus is the Christ of God. They see what his sacrificial atoning death will mean in these verses.

They see Moses and Elijah, and they hear the voice of the Father. They see the glory of the Lord, and find that the glory of the Lord is good, but not safe.

So what do our verses tell us about the Lord's glory? Well, let's find out, starting with verses 28 and 29.

Now about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing came dazzling white.

[5:10] So a few verses prior, Peter had confessed that Jesus is the Christ of God, is the Son of God, is the Savior. Well now, Peter, John, and James see his glory unveiled.

They see that Christ is the Son of God, as Peter confessed. They see who Jesus is, and they see his glory.

So what happens next? Verse 30. Behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. So Moses and Elijah are there. There to affirm what Peter affirmed. There to affirm what Jesus said that he must suffer and overcome.

Moses and Elijah are standing in, bearing witness to who Jesus is, and what it is he's going to accomplish in Jerusalem. And why these two? Why Moses and Elijah?

[6:25] Why these guys in particular? Well, Moses is standing in here as the one who gave the law to Israel.

The one through whom the old covenant was given to Israel. He stands here affirming that the law and the old covenant bear witness to Jesus. That's what he's doing there.

And Elijah stands in here representing the prophets, who foretold that a savior would come and that God would establish a new covenant. And without a doubt, Moses spoke of Jesus and wrote of Jesus.

In John 5, 46, we see that Jesus said to those who refuse to believe in him. If you believed Moses, you would believe me for he wrote of me.

Now let's think for a second about what Moses wrote about Jesus. And there are too many examples to count, I think.

[7:33] But let's look at some of the highlights. You know, every week during our Eucharistic liturgy, we remember that Jesus is our Passover lamb. As the New Testament teaches us, right?

Now what this tells us is that the Passover, as described in the Old Testament, as described by Moses, is a type and a symbol and a foreshadowing of Christ.

Well, let's look and see if that's so in Exodus 12. Now what's going on here is that in the tenth and final plague before the Exodus, before God set his people Israel free from slavery in Egypt, God said that he would come through the land of Egypt with a vengeance, striking down the firstborn of every household for keeping God's people in slavery.

But God told his people Israel that his judgment would pass over them. Well, how did that work? Well, look with me at Exodus 12, starting at verse 3. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month, every man shall take a lamb according to their father's houses, a lamb for a household.

[8:53] And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons. According to what each can eat, you shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it.

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning. Anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

In this manner you shall eat it, with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand. And you shall eat in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

[10:06] For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.

I am the Lord. Look at this, verse 13. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are.

And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

So God speaking through Moses here. Speaking about the blood of a spotless lamb. Well, isn't Jesus identified as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

Isn't Jesus spotless without sin? And isn't Jesus our sacrificial lamb?

[11:12] And what does the text say? When I see the blood, I will pass over you. If you have the blood of the lamb, if you are covered by it, then the judgment of God will pass over you, will pass by you.

You will be spared through the covering the blood of the lamb. So it is with the lamb of God, our Lord Jesus, whose blood we find redemption.

Did Moses speak of Jesus and write of Jesus? Well, does the Passover lamb point us to Jesus? Absolutely.

And all through the law, all through the Torah, given by God to Israel through Moses, we see example after example of types and symbols of Christ, of sacrifices that point us to the one great sacrifice of Jesus, of the importance of sacrificial blood that points us to the importance of the sacrificial cleansing blood of Christ.

We see those examples over and over again. And that's not all. Moses spoke of Christ in Deuteronomy 6, verse 15, when he spoke to the children of Israel.

[12:38] The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. It is to him you shall listen. Jesus is a prophet like Moses, even greater than Moses.

Let's think for a second how he's like Moses in a way that no other prophet is. Well, God gave the old covenant to Israel through Moses, right?

But God gave the new and better covenant through his son, Jesus Christ, a covenant in the blood of Jesus.

Now through Moses, God ordered the sacrifice of bulls and goats, which could never put away sin completely. But through Jesus, God gave us his only son to offer himself once and for all time.

To shed his blood to put away our sins completely and forever. Moses wrote of Jesus, told us to listen to him.

[13:53] Well, and what of the prophets? Did they speak of Jesus? Prophets represented on the holy mountain by Elijah.

Now we could be here all day if we went through what the prophets said about Jesus. I'll spare you guys that. But didn't the prophets say that the servant of the Lord would bear the sins of God's people, would be bruised for their transgressions, and in doing that would cause many to be accounted righteous?

As we see in Isaiah 53, for example. Didn't the prophets say that God would establish a new covenant where he would forgive the iniquity of his people, write his law on their hearts and remember their sin no more?

As we see in Jeremiah 31. And in Jesus, isn't that precisely what God has done for us?

The prophets wrote of Jesus, spoke of Jesus, didn't they? So, to go back to the mountain, to our gospel text for this morning.

[15:10] In Luke 9, verses 30 and 31, we see Moses representing the law, Elijah representing the prophets, both of them bearing witness to who Jesus is and what his death would accomplish.

Moses, who spoke of the Passover lamb, there and by his presence affirming that Jesus is the great Passover lamb.

Moses, who wrote of Jesus, affirming again what he wrote. Elijah, there representing the prophets. The prophets who foresaw the new covenant that Jesus would establish in his blood.

That Jesus would bear the sins of his people on the cross, and that God would forgive the sins of his people. Both Moses and Elijah are there, reminding us that the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, it's about Jesus.

It promises Jesus, and promises redemption through the blood of Jesus to all who will receive him. There's one more voice in our passage for this morning, bearing witness to Jesus.

[16:33] A voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him. It's the voice of the Father, isn't it?

Affirming that Jesus is his son, his chosen one, his anointed one, and his beloved. Affirming that the disciples, and we too, are to listen to Jesus.

To look to Jesus as the chosen one of the Father, the one with whom the Father is well pleased. So we heard the Father say at the baptism of Jesus. Again, the Father tells us exactly who Jesus is. Hear his voice, affirming that we are to look to Jesus. To listen to Jesus. To place our faith in Jesus and be saved. And he is saved. Why? Because he is the only son of the Father.

Given by God so that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If we look at how the disciples reacted to all of this, it's clear they were afraid.

[17:49] I mean, Peter stumbles all over himself saying, Hey, let's throw up some tents, guys. They saw the glory of Jesus unveiled on that mountain, brothers and sisters.

They saw Moses. They saw Elijah. They saw Elijah. Those great men of God. Talking to Jesus and acknowledging Jesus. Acknowledging his departure that was to come in Jerusalem. Some translations put it his exodus. His death that would bring us life. The disciples heard the voice of the Father.

And they got to see just how good and how unsafe the glory of God really is on that mountain. They would know again just how good and unsafe the glory of God really is when Jesus went to the cross.

As Moses and Elijah foretold. As the law and the prophets foretold. What Jesus gloriously accomplished on the cross was good. He went obediently, perfectly unto death to undo our disobedience.

[19:07] Out of his love for us, he was wounded so that we might be healed. It was good. But what he did and what he accomplished wasn't safe.

It cost him his life and his own precious blood. But it was even more unsafe for death and the devil. Because by his death and resurrection, he conquered them forever and set us free, brothers and sisters.

Now for us, as we're about to go into Lent. We'll be preparing to remember the betrayal and death of Jesus during Holy Week.

We'll be preparing to remember the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. In Lent. Let's take this opportunity given to us to reflect on these things right before we dive in.

Let's remember that just as Jesus showed his glory to his disciples on the mountain. So he shows his glory on the cross.

[20:20] So let's each of us meditate on Christ crucified often during Lent. Seeing the glory of Christ crucified.

Let's see the glory of Christ's perfect obedience even unto death. And let's see the glory of his blood shed for our sins.

Let's draw nearer, closer to our crucified Savior. What will we find when we do? Well, we will find that his power, his glory, and his blood will change us in ways that are so amazing, we can't even imagine what God has in store for us.

So let's draw near to Christ crucified. Seeking to imitate his obedience. Seeking to trust wholly and confidently in the forgiveness that we have through his blood.

It will be glorious. It won't be safe, but it will be good. Are we ready?

[21:48] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.