

# Rise and Have no Fear

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn now to Matthew chapter 17 and looking at verses 1 to 8 this morning, the account we have here of the transfiguration. But we want to focus actually on the second part of it where the Lord came and dealt with the disciples and their fear.

But we need to take account of what happened beforehand in order to understand the relevance of that and the importance of that too. Now you can see actually at verse 21 in the previous chapter how there is a transition or a change in the way that Jesus sets about his ministry and teaching. Because from verse 21 there you can see that the emphasis then comes to fall upon teaching the disciples. So there is a new phase if you like in the ministry of Jesus from this point in the Gospel of Matthew.

Where he begins to teach the disciples about his coming death and the suffering that he is going to endure at the hands of those who are going to condemn him and examine him. The scribes, the elders and so on as he mentions there, the chief priests.

It says, from that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. In other words, the transfiguration and the account you have of it actually fits into that.

[ 1 : 25 ] It fits into the way that Jesus was instructing these disciples and these three disciples, especially in regard to the transfiguration of the way in which he was going to come to be dealt with in that way and how he was going to have to lay down his life and actually come to die as he did on the cross for their benefit and the benefit of his people.

And so what you find in the transfiguration would in fact be very instructive for the disciples, not necessarily at the time, obviously, because we find from Luke's Gospel, for example, that Peter, when he spoke as he did here to make these three tents, he just spoke not knowing what he said. He just didn't know what to say. And so he thought that this might be something that was relevant, which really it wasn't. But it fits into the way that they would reflect upon what they saw there.

Indeed, if you go to the second letter of Peter, you'll find that he picks up on what happened in the transfiguration and relates that to the truthfulness and the authority of God's own word.

And you can check that out for yourselves afterwards in the end of the first chapter of second Peter. But here you find this transfiguration of Jesus was something that these three disciples saw and heard.

[ 2 : 43 ] And that's what we want to deal with, first of all, what the disciples saw and heard in this incident. And then we'll deal with how the disciples reacted and were then taught by Jesus.

How they reacted and were taught by Jesus. What did they, first of all, see and hear? Well, let's look at what it says. They went up to this high mountain, Jesus, and these three disciples, Peter, James, and John.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents. So what they saw was Jesus transfigured. And they saw these two Old Testament people, these personnel from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, actually speaking with Jesus as that transfiguration took place.

The transfiguration is described as his face shining like the sun. You can't look into the sun. So it was that bright. And his clothes became as white as light.

[ 3 : 56 ] Mark tells us that his clothes became so white that they were way beyond what anybody who was then in the practice of bleaching clothes or keeping white white, as you still find with some of the stuff that you get to put into your washing machines, that it's especially the best thing for whites.

Okay, well, this is saying you could not possibly make clothes as white as this. They were just brilliantly white. And what is happening there is that what has altogether been really veiled until now in regard to Jesus and his identity and who he is, has now just momentarily and for a few short moments come to be really seen in this form.

In other words, it's God, it's deity, it's what's divine. It's Jesus as the son of God. It's Jesus as God, the God he always was.

The God he never ceased to be as he came into this world. But that glory of this God who is veiled because he's taken, as we saw last week at the communion, as we emphasized he took our human nature.

But he took our human nature so as to humble himself and to make himself a servant of the Father. And therefore, this glory that belongs to him as the son was veiled from view.

[ 5 : 20 ] People didn't see it. All they saw was the human nature. All they saw was the human frame. The human Jesus. And here, briefly, the divine Jesus shines through.

It's not the beginning of something that he didn't have up to now. But it's this brief revealing of something he always was. And you have to understand, too, that it was actually an anticipation, if you like, as well, of the glory that he would yet have after his death and resurrection and then his exaltation to glory.

When you read John chapter 17, his great prayer there in the upper room before he went out to face the cross. He was praying to the Father. He was giving thanks to the Father.

He was asking certain things of the Father. And this is one of the things he asked. Jesus knew he was.

He knew where he had come from into this world. He knew where he was going back to. He knew the glory that properly belonged to him.

[ 6 : 36 ] That he had to, for the most part, keep hidden in his life in this world. And he knew that when he was going back to that glory that he left in order to come into this world, that he was not going to leave his human nature, never our human nature behind.

When he's praying, glorify me with you, with the glory I had with you, remember he's going to be exalted and was and has been exalted as the God-man, as the complete Jesus.

Our human nature. In the words of a famous theologian of the past and a free churchman of that to Rabbi Duncan, John Rabbi Duncan.

The dust of the earth is actually on the throne of the universe. Jesus in his human nature, the human nature that belongs to us as well, a proper human nature, is now exalted to glory.

And that's anticipated in the way that coming through this human nature, this bright, shining glory of God is actually revealed briefly on that mountain.

[ 7 : 48 ] And you know, from Luke's gospel, it would appear that this probably took place at night. Luke chapter 9, verse 37, speaks about when they were coming down from the mountain on the next day.

And that could well indicate that they were coming down from the mountain on the next day in the morning and that this episode really took place at night.

And if it did, and it probably did, just imagine the effect of that, even more so than if it had happened through the day. In the darkness of the night, in the darkness of the night, that all of a sudden you have this indescribably glorious outburst of light from the person of Jesus.

Lighting up all around him. And seen by these disciples. And causing them amazement.

It reminds us, doesn't it, friends, of the grandeur, the magnificence of the person of Jesus. The greatness of his person.

[ 8 : 56 ] The indescribable immensity of this person. Even here in his life on earth. He is this glorious person.

Though it's kept hidden for the purpose of him being a servant. And being humiliated. And subjecting himself to this life of obedience.

But that's who he is. Never lose sight of who this Jesus is. And when you ask, who is he? You don't just look at his human nature.

You look to what you see in the transfiguration described. You look to his person as the son of God. That's who he is. And that's who he must be.

To you and to me always. And the second thing that they saw and heard was Elijah and Moses and Elijah talking with him. And of course there's been this question constantly asked.

[ 9 : 55 ] Why Moses and why Elijah? Well don't expect me to tell you categorically. Because there are so many opinions about that. And I have my own views and you have your own views.

Why Moses and Elijah? Well they're obviously from important periods in the Old Testament. Some people say Moses represents the law. That's understandable of course.

Others say that Elijah represents the prophets. And therefore that's the whole Old Testament virtually. The law and the prophets. But then Elijah wouldn't necessarily be the most obvious representative of the prophets.

Would he? Maybe to some people he would. But there are other prophets that probably would have been chosen rather than Elijah. And the clue perhaps.

I'm just going to say perhaps. Is in the subject that they were actually engaged in conversation about. You need to go to Luke for his description of the transfiguration for that.

[ 10 : 54 ] And Luke tells us that they spoke about his exodus. The AV has deceased. But the word in Greek is his exodus. And you can of course then think.

Well Moses was involved in the exodus. Moses in fact was the leader of the exodus out of Egypt. Which is the great Old Testament picture or symbol of redemption.

Of salvation. Of deliverance. Deliverance through a sacrificial death. The lamb of God. The Passover lamb. That God had specified. So you can see that Moses is associated with exodus.

The topic they were speaking about. The exodus of Jesus. The going out of Jesus from this world. Which would be through death. And resurrection. And then exaltation. That's the root for him.

Back to the glory. And Elijah too was involved in an exodus. Wasn't he? Because his going out from this world. Was an exodus without death.

[ 11 : 55 ] And we saw recently that. In regard to Enoch. As well as to Elijah. God was actually showing these people in the Old Testament. That not only was there something beyond death.

And something to do with life beyond the grave. But life beyond death. For God's people. Is life above death. Life that has a victory over death.

Life to which death will never again come. To claim them as a victim. Christ has given them that victory. By his resurrection over death.

And so you can associate Elijah with an exodus. An exodus that did not see death. That triumphed over death. And indeed Elijah is mentioned.

As the one that was prophesied of. That would come before the coming of the Messiah. As you see in the later part of the passage. Why then they asked him. Do the scribes first say that Elijah must first come?

[ 12 : 52 ] He said well Elijah does come. And then they realized that he spoke to them of John the Baptist. Who dressed like Elijah. Who lived like Elijah in the desert. And maybe that's why Elijah mentioned here as well.

As well as the fact that he had this amazing exodus from this world. When you put it all together. At least in taking that point of view. You come to this conclusion.

They were talking about the exodus of Jesus. An exodus that involves redemption for his people. A deliverance for his people. And a deliverance for his people.

That deals with death as the wages of sin. And gives them victory over that death. And brings them life above death. That's what Jesus came to do.

That's what the ministry of Jesus is all about. To bring us that redemption. And that's why Peter's request there.

[ 13 : 52 ] In these words that said to Jesus. It is good if you wish I will make three tents. One for you. One for Moses. One for Elijah. That's why it was so inappropriate.

Because he was suggesting that things could stay as they were there. That this just felt right. And that Jesus and the three of themselves.

And Moses and Elijah would be best just keeping things as they were there. Not have to go off this mountain. And face the things that were facing them down below us. You see they were very instantly plunged into dealing with people who had demon possession.

And all sorts of other problems. That the Lord had given them to face up to. And to actually minister to in his name. And to help them.

But of course. It couldn't remain like this. This is just a glimpse. And a teaching. For these disciples. To help them for the future. To help them face what they must face as his disciples.

[14:57] And so. The request is inappropriate. Peter didn't know what he was saying. Neither would you and I. And then they heard this voice from the cloud.

They saw first of all this cloud. While he was still speaking. 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. Or hear him. Now of course. That reminds you straight away. Doesn't it? Of this cloud. This famous cloud.

In the Old Testament. That hovered above the mercy seat. In the Holy of Holies. Within the depths of the tabernacle. Where you find it described. Between the cherubim.

Above the mercy seat. Where atonement was made. What did that represent? It represented the presence of God. The presence of God.

[15:52] Represented by a bright cloud. That just lived there. That dwelt there. And where atonement was made. Where the blood of atonement was sprinkled. On the day of atonement.

In the very presence of that altar. Of that mercy seat. And in the presence of this cloud. This presence of God. Here is that.

Same type of cloud. Associating this occasion. With God being present there. God drawing near to it. God presenting himself there. And then out of the cloud.

Comes this voice. This is my beloved son. The voice of God. The voice of the father. With whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. A confirmation that.

This Jesus. Is in fact. The very presence of God. Promised in the Old Testament. Represented in the Old Testament. The place where atonement is made.

[16:53] Where sin is dealt with. Where a death takes place. That deals with sin. And with that God is well pleased. In him. Or with him.

I am well pleased. So how did the disciples react. And how were they then taught. Well they reacted.

As you and I would react. First of all. They prostrated themselves. They fell down. On their faces. And they were terrified. People have usually.

A fear of what you call. The supernatural. Nowadays anything that. Appears to just be. Beyond the normal. Or you could. They use the word. Paranormal of course.

And people have a. Most people have a. A fear of that. A fear of ghosts. A fear of hearing voices. A fear of. That sort of thing. But this is God. This is God.

[17:53] Actually present. And these people know. That God is present. And what do you do.

When God is present. And when you know. That God draws near to you. I know we don't. Have this kind of experience.

As they experienced it. But when you know. The presence of God. Even a bit like that. Through his word. Or through the gospel. Being preached to you. And realize perhaps. On your knees.

And praying to God. That you have that sense. That God is there. That God is present with you.

Well what do you do? You prostrate yourself. You take the lowest place. You don't stand up.

As if. You have a right. To actually be. On the same level. As God. And they were terrified. And that's what God does.

When he draws near. He fills. People with. A sense of fear. Now I'm not suggesting that. When you know God. As your friend. And as your father. That when he draws near.

[18:50] To you. You're just. Instantly made afraid. But still. There's an element of. Awe. And of. Fear. And of reverence. In it.

And in fact. You'll find. Through the Old Testament. That this is generally the case. Genesis 28. For example. And verse 17. Where Jacob. Had this vision. Of the ladder.

That was stretching up. To heaven. And the angels of God. In transit. On it. And where he had set out. This pillow. This stone.

That's his pillow. And he lay down to sleep. And he had this. This vision. And when he woke up. He said. This is a place of awe. For surely.

God is in this place. And I had not realized it. This is the very house of God. And this is the gate of heaven. What did he do?

[19:45] He fell upon his face. He was afraid. And you'll find it. In many other places. Exodus 20. Where God had come down. On Mount Sinai.

Where there was thunder. And lightnings. The mountain itself. Was shaking. The fire. On the top of the mountain. Represented. And showed. The presence of God. What did the people do?

And what did the people say? They came to Moses. And said. You. Please. Speak to us. But don't let God speak to us. In case we die. You see.

God was showing them. The immensity. Of his presence. And he was showing to them. Their need of a mediator. And that's why they came to Moses. And they said.

If you go between us. And God. We'll be alright. And really. That's what you have. In Jesus as well. And as we'll see in a minute. That's built into the way.

[ 20 : 39 ] That Jesus spoke to them. And touched them. And reassured them. And that's why he comes to reassure them.

He came. And touched them. And then he said to them. Rise and have no fear. All of that is really. Really important. And precious.

And relevant to us today. For all our fears. Not just. A fear. Of being afraid of God. Perhaps. But all our fears. We all have fears. We all have different types of fears.

We are afraid of the unknown. We may be afraid of the future. We may be afraid of something. That we need to have done. By way of surgery. By way of treatment. By way of.

We need to be afraid. Of so many things. Afraid of possibilities. Afraid of losses. Afraid of all. So many things. That we are afraid of.

[ 21 : 36 ] What do we do without fears? How do we try to cope with them? Where do we take them? Well listen.

Jesus came. And touched them. And said. Rise. And have no fear. Where can you have your fear. Properly dealt with.

Where can you have your fears. Really addressed. In a way that will deal with them. Adequately. And that will reassure your heart. That you have no reason to fear.

In the touch of Jesus. In the touch of Jesus. He is not present physically anymore. He doesn't draw near to you.

As he did these disciples. Physically. And touch them. And lay his hand on you. But through the gospel. And through his spirit. He comes to be present with his people.

[ 22 : 34 ] He comes actually to touch their lives. With his own presence. With his own very hand. You might say. Spiritually. And to reassure them.

Listen. I am here. And because I am here. You can get up. And you need not fear. Your fears. Are all taken care of. By me. That is what he is reassuring us of. And you know. It is interesting too. When you read that Jesus came.

And touched them. The touch of Jesus. In the gospels. Is really important. And especially. When you come to. A moment like this.

Where people are just. Trembling for fear. And he comes and touches them. He doesn't just come. And stand near them. And speak into the situation. And in fact. If you went to.

[ 23 : 29 ] Chapter 8. For example. You would find him. Dealing there with. A leper. And a leper. In those days. This was somebody. You just did not touch.

They were put aside. They were quarantined. So as not to come into contact. With other people. And when Jesus dealt with.

That man with a leprosy. He didn't just come near him. And say now. Don't come any further. I will deal with you. But I'll just speak. And you'll be cured. He came and he touched him.

And ceremonially. In the Old Testament. If you touched a leper. You were regarded as ceremonially unclean. You would have to be ceremonially. Put aside from the company.

Of God's people. Until the ritual of cleansing. Was actually over. Jesus. Touched him. He didn't become defiled by that.

[ 24 : 32 ] He didn't become unclean himself. By that. And it's a reminder to us. That when Christ acted as our redeemer. In coming into this world. In taking our nature.

In taking our sin. In taking our death. In dying that death. He was touching our defilement. And that defilement.

Was laid upon him. In his person. He remained absolutely clean. But in taking our sin. He took our penalty.

He took what we deserved. And was applied to him. He came into actual contact. With our sin. And all that was attached to it.

To pay its price. That's why he's qualified to be our redeemer. That he could do that. And remain himself in his person.

[ 25 : 35 ] Spotlessly. Spotlessly. Clean. And undefiled. And holy. And he comes to reassure them. Rise and have no fear. What is it you're afraid of today? What am I afraid of today? What are we afraid of in the next weeks? Months? Whatever.

Where's the answer to our fear? Where's the antidote to it? Where's God's provision against it? It's here. Isn't it? He's really saying.

Get up. Don't be disconsolate. Don't be filled with fear. Don't be afraid. Because I'm here. I'll take care of it. I'll look after you. I'll be your savior. I'll deal with your fears and with your enemies. It's all taken care of.

[ 26 : 40 ] And then they see. They lifted up their eyes and saw no one but Jesus only. And that too is important, isn't it? Because there they were looking at Jesus and Moses and Elijah and this glory.

And they were talking with him and they were talking about his exodus. And they were all involved in this. And these disciples were filled with fear. And they saw this cloud and they heard this voice.

And then when they lifted up their eyes, after all this was done, nothing was left.

But Jesus himself. The glory had gone. The other personnel had gone. The voice had disappeared. The cloud was there no more. Jesus only.

Why is it important? Because it really reminds us that we have no other savior but Jesus. Not Elijah. Not Moses. Not the law. Not the prophets. This person. This Jesus alone. Acts chapter 4. The disciples having learned all of this and other things besides when they were actually demonstrating then that Jesus was alive.

[ 27 : 48 ] That he had risen from the dead. They were preaching the gospel. This is what they said. Acts chapter 4 and verse 12. There is none other name given amongst men whereby we must be saved.

He is the only one. Exclusively. It closes out all rivals. Whether they are philosophies or systems of belief or individual leaders of movements. It doesn't matter.

This alone is our savior. And he doesn't need any assistance. And he certainly does not like any rivals.

And it means for you and for me today something very important in our own hearts. There is no room in our hearts for any other Lord. There is no room in our hearts for anyone else to rule our lives.

That's why you have to attach these words to the words that came from the cloud as well. This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. They saw Jesus only.

[ 28 : 56 ] Listen to him. You will have all kinds of voices as I have all kinds of voices. That address you today and throughout the course of your life. Voices that themselves are designed to lead you away from Christ.

To lead you away from putting your confidence in Christ. Your whole confidence in the whole Christ. You listen to him only. Let his voice be the one that really dictates your life.

That governs you. That shows you how to think and what to think. And what to say. And how to behave. They saw no one. But Jesus only.

Now take that with you as I must. Into all our situations. And all our circumstances. Personally. Congregationally. Whatever. Let it be so for us on a daily basis.

That we see no one but Jesus only. That he is the one. That our eyes look to. That our hearts long for. That our thoughts focus on.

[ 30 : 10 ] Jesus only. Let's pray. Gracious and eternal God. Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We thank you for the way in which. Your word is so instructive. Even in telling us. Of these great events of long ago. We bless you that you have taken account of.

Our circumstances in life. When you have come to. Have your word written for our benefit. Lord today we pray that we might indeed focus upon you. That we might run the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus. The author and finisher of our faith. Go before us we pray and hear us. For his name's sake. Amen.