

The Church's Glory

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[0 : 00] Hello everybody. I didn't introduce myself properly before. My name is Aaron Roberts and I look after the service. I'd love to meet you afterwards. So I'll be hanging out on a table with some Life Explored stuff after the service.

So if you want to come and meet me, that'd be great. Come and say hi. So Matthew 17. So this is unusual, isn't it Katie Deer, this story? This is an unusual story. Now, helpfully, God interprets the story for us. God tells us what to do with it.

He actually gives us the action point for this quite interesting story. And the action point is actually the only command found in the whole passage.

And the command is verse 5. Right at the end, God says, listen to him. So there we go. That's the point. God is telling his disciples to listen to the words of Jesus.

Now, why should they? Why should they do that? Why should we do that? It's probably a good question as well. Why listen to Jesus? Why privilege the voice of Jesus over everyone else's voices, everyone else's opinions, even your own?

[1 : 22] Why? Why listen to Jesus? Well, because of who Jesus is. And in this passage, that's revealed to us in a pretty dramatic way.

So let's get into it, but a little bit of context first. So two weeks ago, this was six days before the Transfiguration, as it's called here. Peter had said to Jesus, you are the Christ, the one who would rescue us.

So what did Peter get right? He got the title of Jesus right, the Christ. He got the title right, but he got the job description wrong. Last week, we talked about the job description of Jesus.

And Jesus very plainly said to his disciples what the title Christ means, what that job actually looks like. And it was a complete shocker to everybody. It was not going to go as expected.

The journey ahead for Jesus would be, there would be pain, there would be suffering, and there would be death. And then Jesus says after that, if you want to follow me, you're going to walk this path as well.

[2 : 30] So a complete bombshell there for them. Now we get to our passage tonight. So it's six days later, Jesus takes his inner circle, John, James, Peter, up a mountain.

And whilst up there, it says in verse 3, Jesus transfigured before them. So I've got this mate back in New Zealand called Matt Stott, who's a really dear old friend of mine.

He has a young son. And I can't remember if I've told you this story before. I might have. They like to travel as a family a lot. And when on tours, he purposely lets his son just run riot, like be really, really naughty.

And he has a reason for doing this. So they came to Vancouver a number of years ago, and he took his son to Science World and didn't control his son at all.

Just let his son go anywhere he wanted. So if he was in this church, his son would just walk up here and just start wandering around. And, you know, we'd go back here just to see what's back there.

[3 : 35] And Matt would let him do that. And he let him do it at Science World. He let his son run through the staff-only doors on purpose because he wanted to see what was behind those doors.

So he knew he had an excuse to go back there. So his son would, you know, run in there and he would walk in there and he'd go, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

Just trying to get my son, right? What do you do? You know, he's a kid, right? Basically, he just wanted to get to see what no one usually gets to see.

That's kind of what's happening here. So there is this, Jesus has talked about his journey ahead. And it's great darkness, a lot of darkness, a lot of pain.

But for a moment, the disciples get to see behind like the staff-only door of heaven. God is lifting the veil.

[4 : 33] It's like he's peeling back the humanness of Jesus so we can see his godness, his glory. And what does it look like?

Verse 2. And he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white. I remember my daughter, when she was quite young, maybe four, three years ago perhaps, one morning she said to me, Daddy, Daddy, this is my daughter Sadie, she said, Daddy, Daddy, I saw Jesus last night.

And I was thinking, oh, okay. I honestly just thought she was trying to, we have a great relationship. And I thought she was just telling me the kind of thing she thought I would like to hear.

So, I know, I mean, so cynical, so terrible. I know, I know, I know. So I said, so Sadie, okay, great. Oh, cool. Oh, that's lovely. That's lovely. So what did he look like?

Expecting her to describe the Jesus of children's Bibles, like, you know, white, hippie Jesus. And so I said, so what did he look like? And she said, oh, it's hard to say, because it was just all light.

[5 : 55] And I thought, it's like goosebumps, like, oh my goodness, wow, okay. Wow. Verse 2. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Jesus was transfigured. And you might think, ah, this is the same thing that happened to Moses in the Old Testament, right? Like, Moses was transfigured, his face glowed. Like, this has happened before.

Moses on Mount Sinai after being with God. Well, yes and no, it's actually not like Moses, because Moses' face shone because he was reflecting the glory of God, which was a wonderful thing.

Jesus shone because his inner being was being revealed. So there's a great difference here. The curtain was being pulled aside, and it was light. It was light.

It was undefiled beauty and goodness. Darkness, vanquishing light. And while this was happening, verse 3, and there appeared to them Elijah and Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

[7 : 13] I mean, you know, wow. A couple of heavy hitters, obviously, from the Old Testament there. Elijah, who we talked about over summer, maybe the greatest of the prophets, one of the great prophets.

Moses, the bringer of the law. Both very faithful followers of God who experienced immense suffering in their life, had quite unusual ends to their life, and had these mountaintop experiences with the glory of God.

But despite the similarities, it would be a mistake to sort of go, okay, there's this trifecta, three really amazing, prophecy, godly men types right there.

That would be a mistake to think that, that they're being presented as equals. And I think the reason this really bizarre thing happens here is to say they're not equal. And the passage makes that quite clear.

And Peter is kind of the foil here, I think, for presenting that truth that they're not equals. So Peter is clearly really overwhelmed, and overwhelmed, but always keen to talk.

[8 : 25] Perhaps you know people like this. Perhaps you are somebody like this. But anyway, this is Peter. And he says, the first line is so great.

And Peter said to Jesus, so Jesus has been transfigured, and then Elijah and Moses are there. And Peter says, Lord, it's good we're here. It's just really good we're here.

That's the first thing out of his mouth. I think it just sounds like the speeches you get at a wedding, right?

Like the speeches you get at a wedding. It's really good you guys could all be here today. Some of you guys have come a really long way. Moses and Elijah, you actually traveled through time to get here.

Uncle Jim came from Nova Scotia. That was awesome as well. Great effort. I mean, you have to be... Peter obviously doesn't know what he's...

[9 : 34] He's clueless. To be fair, this story is told in Mark and Luke as well. And in Mark and Luke, they add the line, Peter didn't know what he was talking about before saying his...

Before they explained what he said. He's just blurting words out. It's great to be here. And then he says, I will make three tents here. One for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.

And this is Peter's sort of... He's just presenting him. He's just sort of presenting this idea. Like, right, yeah, three tents. Three great guys. Fantastic. One each. Brilliant.

And he thinks they're all equal. And God says, no, no, no. In verse 5. He doesn't even let him keep speaking. Verse 5. And the cloud, we know the Bible talks about the cloud as being the presence of God.

And when he speaks, he doesn't say, here's three really heavy hitters. We're all great guys. Fantastic. No, the focus is on one. One. Focus is on one person in that group.

[10 : 43] One translator put it like this. Verse 5. This is my priceless son. This is my priceless son. And I'm deeply pleased with him. Listen to him.

Listen to that guy. I love that line. It reminds us that... Like, we know, if you're here and you're a Christian, you know that Jesus is precious to you.

But this is a great reminder that Jesus is, of course, so precious to his heavenly father as well. And the father wants his church, his people, to revere his son.

To listen to his son more than any other person, more than any other project or cause. He wants his people to listen to his son more than any other voice.

Do you guys think that Jesus is smart? Somebody asked me this question the other day. It was a really good one.

[11 : 44] Do you think Jesus is smart? Do you understand what I'm saying? Smart. Smart. We know, you probably believe Jesus is kind and he was with the poor and he was wonderful.

But do you think he's actually smart? Do you think he knows what he's talking about? I mean, of course. He had the best information on humanity.

Human beings have been trying to explain humanity and why we do things and explain the world away for millennia. Jesus has the best explanation. That's why we want to be enamored by him and listen to him.

More than our favorite podcast, more than our favorite influential thinker. Because his words are such a great gift to us. I mean, it's because it's actually, it's God speaking, isn't it?

When Jesus speaks. That's why we listen to him. It's God speaking. Imagine if we didn't have God speaking to us. Imagine if we didn't have the words of Christ. All we'd have is human opinion.

[12 : 55] And who's to say whose opinion is more valuable than others? We listen to him. Verse 6 says, The disciples were terrified and they fell down.

And there's this really lovely, tender moment. When Jesus goes to them and says, It's okay, you can get up. Don't fear. Verse 8, And when they lifted their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus.

Their vision was clarified. Just Jesus. Let's tie this up. So God pulls back the curtain on heaven.

And they saw Jesus. And he shone like the sun. He shone brighter than anything on earth. And why did they get to see it?

Because death and suffering was ahead of them. But you can actually walk into that. You can walk into that if you align your life with him.

[14 : 05] When you see how immeasurably beautiful Jesus is. I think that's what the transfiguration was showing them. Jesus is immeasurably beautiful. You can walk into anything with him.

So amongst all the voices out there, this is the one to listen to. Folks, if you were here this evening and you're a little bit shaky with Jesus, a bit shaky, a bit shaky, what do I say to you?

Look, if he is glory, if he is the glory, the brightest thing in the universe, the brightest spark in the universe, you can't be shaky with Jesus.

You have to obey him, don't you? Because that kind of awesome, that kind of beauty, you can't have that kind of awesome a beauty on the periphery of your life.

You can't have that kind of love. Sort of over here, to engage with periodically, when you're feeling a bit nervous about life or something. But people try, they try and live their life with Jesus sort of, sort of over there, dipping in and out every now and then.

[15 : 09] But it doesn't work. It doesn't work having Jesus just on your side, just over there somewhere. I love N.T. Wright's words on this. He describes Jesus as the hurricane that became human.

I love that phrase, the hurricane that became human. So let me finish with a short paragraph from him, and then we'll pray the Lord's Prayer. Sean Fraser, who was the intercessory prayer tonight, called in sick just before the service, unfortunately.

But let me finish with N.T. Wright here. He says this, how can you live with the terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that the fire has become flesh, that life itself came to life and walked in our midst?

Christianity is either that, or it means nothing. It's either the most devastating disclosure of the deepest reality in the world, or it's a sham, a nonsense, a bit of deceitful play acting.

Most of us, unable to cope with saying either of those things, condemn ourselves to live in the shallow world in between.

[16 : 16] Folks, let's not be these people that do that. Jesus is too beautiful to put him on the margins. Listen to him.

Amen.