

The Transfiguration

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, which we find on page 1045.

And I've been going through, particularly in the mornings, this Gospel, Gospel of Luke. And I want us just to, again, by way of overview, a passage that's very familiar to us, what is known as the Transfiguration.

It's Matthew that uses that particular word. And we find there, about eight days after these sayings, he took with him, we read that in verse 28, Peter and John and James went up to the mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white, and so on. Now, I suppose if you were to ask Peter, James, and John, what was the greatest experience that they had with Jesus, they might have a problem answering that, because they had a lot of quite extraordinary experiences.

There were many things that they would say, well, it's really hard to say, because, for instance, Peter, James, and John had been with Jesus just in the previous chapter when he raised Jairus' daughter.

[1 : 24] They went into the room, and there was this girl lying dead, a corpse. And Jesus commanded her to rise again. They would never forget that, where they were seeing somebody who was dead, brought to life.

There were many quite extraordinary experiences. But I'm sure that this experience certainly would be one that they would never forget. Peter, many years later, as he writes his own letters, talks about this particular experience.

And I'm sure if you and I had been there as well, we certainly would never, ever have forgotten about it. And we've got to remember, of course, that what is recorded for us here in the Bible is only, as it were, a little of what took place in the life of Jesus, because John himself tells us that the world would hardly contain the books if everything was to be written.

So we have, as it were, it's almost like a bare record of what took place in these years. Now, Jesus, in verse 27, had stated that there would be some standing present who would not taste of death until they had seen, until they saw the kingdom of God.

And that's a very clear reference, I believe, to what occurred here from verse 28, because it's linked to this wonderful display of kingdom glory.

[2 : 52] We were talking this morning about the kingdom of God, that you cannot, it's not territorial, it is not, we talk about the United Kingdom and we can color in parts of this world according to different countries and their own borders and such like.

Well, the kingdom of God isn't confined to borders. It cuts across all languages and races and cultures and creeds and backgrounds, everything.

The kingdom of God, of course, is the church, all believers, all who are united to Jesus Christ, all throughout this world.

And it is a growing kingdom, a kingdom that has none end at all. And let us remember that. We emphasized that this morning, but let's say it again. All the other kingdoms of this world will rise and they will fall.

But this is a kingdom that will never end. And I hope tonight that you are part of that kingdom. Well, anyway, we find that Jesus took these three disciples up a mountain with him as he went to pray.

[4 : 02] And these three, of course, were to play a very important part in the early church, Peter, James, and John. Though James was executed very early on in the history of the early church.

But they were to be the leaders in the early church. And they were given special insights. And they were, as it were, taken with Jesus on special occasions. Like they went further than the other disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He had left the others behind. And he took with him Peter, James, and John. Here he's taken them up the mountain. He took them, as we said, in to the raising of Jairus' daughter.

And it was wonderful for them to be part of this, as it were, this inner circle. Again, this morning we were emphasizing the importance of the friendship of Jesus.

And of how much he delights in his people. We tend to forget that. Jesus wants to fellowship with his people.

[5 : 05] He has made us for himself. And so often we forget that. We're so often caught up with ourselves and what we need and what we want. And we go to the Lord looking for this and looking for that.

Forgetting often that what the Lord wants most of all is for us to fellowship with him. Even when Jesus was in this world, it is very obvious that there were people, there were homes that were special to him.

Where Jesus' friendship and his fellowship and his company was so precious. Like, for instance, the home in Bethany. Jesus loved that home. He loved the people of that home.

It tells us that he loved Lazarus. He loved Mary. He loved Martha. It was one of these, as it were, retreats where he could go to. And he enjoyed the companionship and the company, the fellowship, the togetherness.

Jesus still wants to fellowship with his people. One of the great words, one of the great themes of the Bible is fellowship. And we mustn't lose sight of that.

[6 : 10] And that is why often within our lives, the Lord allows things into our life to drive us to prayer. Because so often our prayer life is just caught up with things and about things.

And the Lord's saying, look, I want you yourself. And it is sometimes as we begin to wrestle in prayer, maybe about things, that we're brought to realize that the great end of prayer is getting to know the Lord more and more.

And maybe for some of you in here tonight, you've come to discover that. That you've gone beyond what you used to be concerned about. And you've come to discover that this is really at the heart of what the Lord is about.

That he wants you to come to know him more and more and more. And we must never lose sight of that, of the Lord's great friendship and his great love for his people.

And the Lord's desire that we will come to know him more and more and more. So we find that he takes these three, Peter, James, and John. Now again, it might be just by the way, but God's law had said that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, everything shall be established.

[7 : 34] And so we have these witnesses witnessing what took place here. John, writing in his letter, he talks about three witnesses in heaven and three witnesses on earth.

And in a sense, in this extraordinary event that took place, we have the three witnesses, as we could say, from heaven, where we have the Father and Moses and Elijah and the three witnesses on earth, where we have Peter, James, and John.

But in verse 29, we find that the Lord Jesus is praying. He went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, this phenomenon occurred.

Now, as we pray, we are not to expect that our face, we're told here about Jesus, that as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered.

And his clothing became dazzling white. We are not to expect that when we pray that such a thing will happen.

[8 : 41] However, having said that, we are not to in any way underestimate or minimize what does happen when we pray. Because we cannot, in our flesh, get closer to the Lord, and I could say in a more spiritual way, than when we come in prayer to him.

We cannot be in the presence of the Lord without the Lord's presence in some way affecting us and touching us.

We've got to remember that. You cannot be, you cannot spend time in the presence of the Lord without that the Lord's presence in some way touching you and affecting you.

Now, of course, we know here in this world, because of sin and its destructive force and power, and because it is such a hindrance to our growth in grace, and it so often spoils and mars our times of

communion and fellowship, that so often we lose those great times of enjoyment and nearness. In glory, there'll be nothing like that to spoil or hinder. And we're told in glory, we shall be like him. That we will mirror our mediator. It's an incredible thought.

[10:10] We often say that the most extraordinary words in the Bible, that we shall be like him. Are there greater words, more extraordinary words than that?

But even here on earth, when we spend time in the presence of the Lord, there will be something of that presence upon us.

You remember when Moses came down from the mount, when he had spent all that time with the Lord, that he didn't realize, but the skin, his skin on his face was actually glistening.

It was shining. He didn't realize it. The children of Israel, they couldn't look on Moses because of the brightness on his face. You remember Stephen, who had been in the presence of the Lord, and Stephen, who was so close to the Lord, that as he was being taken to be executed, it tells us, being full of the Holy Spirit, all that sat on the council, they looked steadfastly on him, and they saw that his face, his face had been that of an angel, that he was shining.

There was something of the Lord's presence about him. So we've got to remember that we cannot be in the presence of the Lord and spend time in the presence of the Lord without something of that affecting our life and being seen within a person's life.

[11:40] It's in the same way that if a person, if you were working in a particular place that had a, I suppose, had a very, very strong, if you were working, say, in a garage and you were going to be dripped in oil all the time, and even although you washed that, I suppose that would be lingering on you.

If you worked in a, in the perfume department of a store, that would be clinging to you. And, in a sense, you cannot be with the Lord for a long time in prayer without something of the Lord's presence, as it were, clinging to you.

Then we have this extraordinary display where Christ, as he prays, he is transformed, as it were, into a glorious figure with a brilliant, brilliant, like, it's almost like I suppose his face had turned into lightning.

Now, it doesn't mean that Jesus was changed into somebody else. His passion was not altered. He was still the same passion. It didn't change his identity.

It didn't destroy, as it were, the visible identity. The disciples weren't saying, oh, it's not Jesus anymore. But as they looked at him, they saw this change take place.

[12:57] Somebody said, a transcendent dignity and splendor. You know, many people, they look at Jesus, and they think of Jesus, and they just see this man.

And they don't see beyond the man, Jesus. But he is God, a very God. And in this moment, he is showing something of who he is, and of the glory of this kingdom.

As we said, this kingdom that hath no end at all. And many people, as they think of the Christian, and they think of the Christian church, they think of it as something that is insignificant, that's something that is weak.

And when they compare it to the glory of this world, and where we see often the tremendous razzmatazz of this world, and all its glitter and glamour, the church can appear so drab, and so insignificant.

Insignificant. But here, this is where we see it. And we see that there's another side. A side that the world cannot see. A side that sometimes we ourselves cannot see.

[14:00] But a side which one day will be truly seen. Because this is, as it were, the future. This is the glory. This is how, this is displaying something of how things will be.

And here we see the Lord Jesus Christ, as it were, this great moment. And of course, it's prior to his death. And that's what we find, that these Moses and Elijah come to speak with him.

Now we again mentioned in the morning how when Jesus returns, it will be very different to the way he came into this world in the first time. It will be in glory. In an awesome glory.

Can I ask the question, supposing Jesus were to return tonight? Are you ready to meet with him? It's quite a thought. Because he's going to return. He's either going to return by dealing with us, by taking us out of this world in death.

Or else he will return before we die. We don't know when he's going to come. And nobody knows. And people sometimes make all kinds of predictions. But there's no point in listening to any of the predictions.

[15 : 14] Because we don't know. There are certain things the Bible shows us that there are circumstances and events going to occur before the end comes. But he will come in such an hour as we don't think.

But he will come in glory. He will come with the clouds. As we said this morning, just as he ascended, so he will descend. And every eye will see him. But it will be the glorious Christ that will return.

And so we find Moses and Elijah, these two men who of course represented the law and the prophets. And they're speaking with Jesus. And they're speaking about his exodus or his departure. And it's very interesting when you think of Moses because the actual, the word departure in the Greek translated exodus. And when you think of Moses, straight away we think of the exodus. And we think of him leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and all that was involved. And here he is speaking to Jesus, speaking to Jesus about his exodus out of this world.

[16 : 19] And it's amazing. I would love to have, no wonder Peter wanted to stay in that mountain forever. Here's Moses, the one who, under God's authority and God's leading, instituted the Passover.

That night where they took the lamb and killed it and took its blood and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel. Speaking about Jesus, here's Moses.

Now with Jesus, the lamb of God. And you see how the wonderful way of how the Old and the New Testament and the law and the prophets because Moses and Elijah stood for the law and the prophets.

And here it's all about Jesus and they're all meeting together here on this mountain. It's a wonderful moment and we see this beautiful tying in of all Scripture together.

And so they're talking about his departure which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. My friend, there's so much that we don't understand even yet about Jesus' death and what it has accomplished.

[17 : 32] Tonight, if you're a believer, you're trusting in Jesus. You're accepting Jesus by faith. But there's an awful lot that you wish you still understood.

I don't believe there's any believer in here, doesn't matter how long you've been following the Lord, who says, you know, I know it all. You don't. I don't. I don't believe anybody does.

There is so much that we still want to know. So much we have not yet understood. even about Christ's death and what it achieved.

There's so much, yes, we accept by faith, we believe, but we say, I wish I could fully understand. Well, one day we will. These things will be so clear to us in glory.

And I believe the highest note that we will sing in glory will be for what Jesus did for us here in this world, where he died on the cross of Calvary, where he gave his life for us.

[18 : 36] He who knew no sin, he was the one who became sin or became a sin offering. And his righteousness, of course, imputed to us. Worthy is the lamb that was slain.

Now, again, when we see this on the mountain, just one or two things, and we're running over things I'm sure we're all familiar with, but that's one of the great things about the Bible. It's important to go back over and to reflect upon these things.

And we find that it's Moses and Elijah on the mountain. And I believe straight away here it answers a question that an awful lot of people ask, and they say, will we know one another in heaven? Well, I don't doubt for one moment but that we will. For instance, I believe our knowledge will be, there will be nothing to hinder or to mar our knowledge.

But here, remember, it's still a sinful world. And here's Peter, James, and John still in this world. And they recognize, they know it's Moses and it's Elijah.

[19 : 39] Here are men who have passed on hundreds and hundreds of years before and they know them. Now, of course, I believe that knowledge was communicated, revealed to them by God's Spirit.

But if God's Spirit is revealing that to them in this world, how much more it will be in the world to come? And of course, our part, remember, the Lord, even in a sinless world, he said, it's not good for man to be alone.

We were not made for isolation. We were made for community, for togetherness. And glory will be community, it will be togetherness.

All centered, of course, around the Lamb who will lead and who will feed from living fountains of water. We must never forget that he will be the center, the object of our affection and our worship and adoration.

But we will all be involved within that community, within that glorious community. And I believe that the spiritual reactions and interactions of this world will be part of what will continue.

[20 : 51] I do not think for one moment that the moment that it ceases in this world, that's it, and that we don't take up a new identity. We're not new people. We remain the same.

Of course, there will be changes. But the body that is laid into the dust, it's the same body that will rise again, not another one. Although there will be a transformation.

The soul that passes on, our soul that passes on, doesn't become another soul. Yes, it is made perfect in holiness as it immediately passes into glory.

But it is still the same soul. So our identity remains. And here are those two people who departed, as we say, the scene of time long, long before.

And they are involved and here they are speaking on the mountain. You know, we so often talk about death as the end. It's not. It's only it is a severing of soul from body.

[21 : 53] But it is not the end. The identity as we say, the, in a sense, the life force, the soul, the spiritual nature of the human passes on.

We see this very clearly revealed to us so often in the Bible. And we find that the disciples become very heavy with sleep and no doubt that sleep is brought about because of the weight of God's presence.

We find that again in the Bible that when God often revealed himself and came, for instance, to the prophets, that they were overcome with sleep. And then we find Peter's request, that Peter made this request.

He wanted to say, and as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah, not knowing what he said.

Of course, Peter, we can see here, he wanted to stay up there. And we can't blame him because it was an awesome experience. And if you've ever had in any way an overwhelming sense of God's presence, you have certainly wanted that experience to remain.

[23 : 10] But it won't remain. It can't remain in this world. These things will be for the world to come, the continuation of it. But Peter wanted that to remain.

But of course, he didn't know what he was saying. And if Peter's wish had been granted, imagine if Jesus had stayed up on that mountain, then the salvation of the world would have been lost.

It wasn't up on the mountain in that glory, but it was on the shame of the cross that our salvation was won and completed. And then this cloud overshadowed, again symbolizing the presence of God, you had the cloud in the wilderness, the cloud in the temple, the cloud at Sinai, here again is the cloud symbolizing the presence of the Lord and the voice comes out of the cloud.

This is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him. You know, some people say, oh well, if I had been up on the mountain and I had seen that, I would have believed, I doubt it.

Faith, remember, comes by hearing. And it's very interesting that Peter, writing about this very incident, he talks, writing in 2 Peter, he says, talking of this, but we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well to heed.

[24 : 41] More than, the most important thing for us in the whole world is the word of God. Let's never lose sight of that.

Often people think, if only I had a vision, then I would become a Christian. Well, it's, now, don't get me wrong, I believe that the Lord can deal with people in their sleep.

I believe that the Lord can deal with people through a dream. But it is still the Lord at work. And it will always be by the word. It is by the word. In case somebody thinks, there might be somebody here and they were converted in their sleep and then they'll say, oh, I can't be a Christian because it was through the night I was converted.

Of course you can. But what I'm saying here is that it is a word. For instance, remember the rich man and Lazarus. And the rich man, as he opens his eyes in hell, and he's in torment, he asks, oh, he said, send Lazarus to my brother lest they come into this place.

And the voice comes back to him and says, no. Supposing one rose from the dead, they won't believe. They have Moses and the prophets.

[26 : 02] let them hear what they have to say. That's what the answer. In other words, it's not some spectacular vision.

It's not some awesome spectacle. It's the word of God. That's what is being said. And that's why the Lord, out of the cloud, that he is saying, this is my son, my chosen one.

Listen to him. Then we find Jesus and the disciples coming down from the mountain, and they're straight into problems, straight into trials.

And how often that is true as well. I'm sure you've discovered that, that very often after a time of blessing, a time of spiritual euphoria, a time when you've been aware of God's presence, you've hardly moved from there when bang.

and we find that the devil is involved in it. And the devil's never far away. He does not want God's people to enjoy the blessing and the thrill of the Lord's presence.

[27 : 06] And straight away they come into this problem. And just look at this, time is going very, very briefly. On the next day when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him.

And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. And so on. And behold, a spirit seizes him.

And he goes into all these convulsions. And it's an incredible problem. So we find this father. And he comes, he's distraught.

He's at the end of his tether, end of his resources. Well, let me say that is the greatest thing that any parent could do, is to bring the problem of their family to the Lord.

And maybe you are here tonight, as a parent, and your children, maybe they're not children as such as young children, but they're still your family and you love them with all your heart.

[28 : 08] And maybe they've turned their back upon all they've been taught. And you're despairing, and you're agonizing, and you're brokenhearted, and you're wondering, what can I do?

Well, look at the example of this father. He went in his brokenness, he went in his agony, and he poured himself out to Jesus. And he asked Jesus to help because he knew nobody else could.

And it's very interesting if we had gone to Mark's account, this is this man who wrestled with belief and unbelief. And he's saying to Jesus Lord, I believe but help mine unbelief.

And again, is that not so often like yourselves? And maybe you're here tonight and that's part of your problem, is that you have begun to believe, but you're overwhelmed with unbelief.

Well, do what that man did. Tell Jesus about it. I love the honesty of this man. He just went to Jesus and he told him how it was.

[29 : 17] And he told him his problems. Even his spiritual, the deepest problems, because a lot of people would be scared to say that before others. Oh, I believe but, oh, I battle with unbelief.

Well, I think if everybody was to be true, that so many of us have times where we would say the very same thing. Lord, I believe but help me and mine unbelief.

And so this man, he brings his case to Jesus. And it's so important for us to bring our children in prayer, and not just our own children. And I would say remember our young in this congregation.

Remember those who have been baptized. Every so often we have parents down the front, and they're bringing their children, and promising to bring them up, in the nurture, in the admonition, in the instruction of the Lord.

We remember them on that day. Do we continue to remember them? I would hope so. That as the days, the weeks, the months, the years go by, that we remember the young people who have been brought up and whose parents have promised to bring them up in the nurture and in the admonition of the Lord.

[30 : 39] And again we see the compassion of Jesus in dealing with this. And it's funny, so often he deals with, it's often an only child.

Jairus' daughter was an only daughter. The widow in Nain, whose son was being buried, was an only son. Here again we find this man, and he's here with his only son.

Jesus turns none away, he comes to him. And as I say, whatever problems you may have, whatever worries or concerns you may have, within your own family please bring them to Jesus.

Others may say to you, don't bother Jesus. The disciples in fact said to some mothers who came with their little ones. What are the disciples? They tried to push them away from Jesus.

And Jesus rebuked them. There was a sternness in Jesus' rebuke. And he's saying, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God.

[31 : 49] So we've got to have this, let us have this place for our young, in the same way as our Lord has. May we bring them prayerfully before the Lord Jesus.

Jesus. And then finally Jesus talks to his disciples about his death. And he's reminding them, because he's spoken before, he's reminding them of what is to happen, or he's telling them, although they don't understand it.

And it's very interesting that it's in the context of just dealing with the demonic, the casting out of the devil. because Christ's death on the cross was a place where he would cast the fool and final blow upon the kingdom of darkness.

We read in Colossians there of how having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them. The power of darkness may be great in your life tonight.

And the power of darkness is certainly powerful in this world as we look at all the carnage, the chaos, the anger, the war, the abuse, all that is going on in this world.

[33 : 05] And so often we feel pained, we feel helpless, as the power of darkness invades and destroys. But let us remember that there is another kingdom and another king that will ultimately triumph, who has already dealt and given the death blow.

Although the kingdom of darkness has not yet been destroyed as such, it is still raging in this world, but its time is limited. And I believe that as the days of this world move to its end, that the fury of hell, knowing that its time is short, is all the more powerful, all the more destructive in seeking to unleash as much havoc and destruction in this world.

Let us pray that the Prince of Peace may come into our own lives, into the life of our community, into the life of our home, into the life of our nation, and into the nations of this world.

Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray tonight that the Son of Righteousness may indeed arise with healing in his wings, and that we might know and experience gospel blessing and gospel peace.

We give thanks, Lord, tonight for all that Jesus Christ is, and the great message of the gospel. May our hearts never lose sight of the glorious truth that is found in Jesus Christ.

[34 : 42] Bless us, we pray, with spiritual and with temporal blessings. Part us all with thy blessing. Do us good, and take from us all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen.