

February 7, 2016
Luke 9:28-36

Transfiguration C
The Mountaintop and the Exodus!

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Transfigured King. Amen.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever been on top of the mountain? Have you ever had that mountain top experience? That spiritual high! That spiritual excitement! I'm sure at one point or another in your life you've been there. Mountaintops are pretty incredible. What a view you can see into the valley. On top of mountains you can see quite a distance. There are points that when you are on top of a mountain you may not want to come down. Before we go to the top of this mountain in our text today, there's something important to look at the in very first verse of our text.

The gospel writer writes: ²⁸ *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.*¹ We start in here and we have no idea what St. Luke means when he says, "About eight days after these sayings..." What sayings is Luke referring? In order to understand the context around this Transfiguration account let's read a bit from Luke 9. ¹⁸ *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"* ¹⁹ *And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen."* ²⁰ *Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."* ² You might be surprised that Luke doesn't give us Peter's rebuke of Jesus, but we do hear this: ²¹ *And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,* ²² *saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."* ³

Peter correctly confesses who Jesus is and then Jesus goes on to explain what the Christ must do. That he must suffer many things. As we look at the accounts of the gospels and you hear the stories of the disciples...they are confused, perhaps even bewildered. The disciples do know that Jesus is the Christ. They have that right, but they are also hoping and going along with the crowds that the Christ is going to be some sort of political liberator. Perhaps they are also hoping that he will restore them to the glory days of King David and King Solomon. The teaching of suffering, death, resurrection is completely out of their line of understanding. And then Jesus tells them: ²³ *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* ²⁴ *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.* ²⁵ *For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?* ²⁶ *For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory*

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:28). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:18–20). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:21–22). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” ⁴

Well what? Take up a cross. These disciples are completely confused. This is where we pick up the story today. Jesus leads these confused men, Peter, James, and John, up on top of the mountain to pray. As Jesus prays, the disciples they fall asleep. They were tired. When the disciples woke up...they had a mountaintop experience. Jesus was transfigured before them. He was shining brightly. His clothes were dazzling white. He was also talking with Moses and Elijah. That's pretty amazing. Moses had been dead for centuries and Elijah he was taken up to heaven in the Chariots of Fire.

Moses and Elijah appeared before Jesus and they were talking about the departure that Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. The word for departure is interesting...it actually is the word for Exodus in the Greek. Perhaps as Peter, James, and John awoke they heard Moses, Elijah, and Jesus talking about the Exodus that Jesus was going to have in Jerusalem. The exodus that like the first that it will lead to the saving of people, but unlike the others, where only one final lamb will be sacrificed. There will be one final offering. It's going to lead to the salvation of souls. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were talking about his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. Yes, the disciples were confused when Jesus told them about what was going to happen in Jerusalem, but Moses and Elijah spoke openly about it. It's a conversation that was revealing to the disciples of what it meant to be the Christ.

Perhaps this was starting to sink in for Peter, he was hearing again how Jesus, his Lord and Master, teacher and friend was going to die. He didn't like that. And it's pretty cool, he's on top of the mountain with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. ³³ *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”⁵* Peter didn't know what he was saying. Luke tells us that. But we might be able to infer, that Peter wanted to stay up here with them. Perhaps he didn't want Jesus to go down into the valley to die. The text doesn't tell us though. Luke just says, he didn't know what he was saying.

As Peter is opening his mouth and inserting his foot into it and speaking foolishness...God the Father spoke and interrupted Peter. ³⁴ *As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”⁶* It is almost as if the Father was saying to Peter – “Open your ears, not your mouth. When my Son says something, it's important!! Especially when it's, “*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and*

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:23–27). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:33). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Lk 9:34–35). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”⁷ It’s pretty important that they pay attention to Jesus. God the Father is now revealing once again that this is His SON. You better listen to him.

Peter, the disciples, the people who heard Jesus, and really us, have the same problem. They weren’t looking for a savior who would go into the valley and die. Peter thought on the mountaintop...This is the Savior I’m looking for. Bright, shining, and stunning. Not someone who was headed down the mountain to die.

It’s really part of our sinful nature...we like the snazzy. We like the spectacular. We like the lights and the splendor. We like the entertainment. Really the lights and glory of a mountaintop experience make us feel good. It’s something quite grand. And yes this is the Savior, we want.

It’s the Savior that churches across the country, even in our own church body give you. They give you a good feeling when you leave “worship”. Is worship about a good feeling or is it about giving you a suffering Jesus who is also the living Jesus who forgives your sins? Perhaps you want something more flashy or jazzy or entertaining. That’s not the Jesus you are going to get. You see our God is holy and just and our God must punish sin. If Jesus is only flashy, jazzy, and entertaining, then our relationship is in trouble, actually broken...it would be a relationship of punishment. Since we sin...we must be punished. If Jesus stayed on top of that mountain...that would be the Savior we would have...a flashy and entertaining savior that doesn’t lead us out of punishment. A suffering Savior who dies and rises does lead us out of punishment.

Today on the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father reveals to us who Jesus Christ is. He answer’s Jesus question, “Who do you say that I am?” He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God...and that means that on the other side of Lent, Jesus is going to another mountain near Jerusalem to die and take away all of our sins. The law as reflected by Moses bear witness to this. The prophets as reflected by Elijah bear witness to this. Jesus has to die to take away sins. The exodus, the departure is going to happen to save the world from their sin.

It’s true...God must punish sin, but he’s not going to punish you. Instead this Christ, this Passover (Exodus) Lamb will take your sin and mine onto Himself and the wrath of God, the divine punishment will rain down upon him. In this way, He will stand in our place and satisfy the justice of the holy God. This is the Savior that we see on the mountain top as He talks with Moses and Elijah. God the Father identifies Him as the Chosen One.

As the Father identifies Him as the Chosen One, our ears are opened to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. The Suffering Servant who is called “My Chosen” in Isaiah

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Lk 9:22). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

42. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*⁸

God the Father tells the disciples and you and I to listen to him. Listen to the one that taught that he would suffer and die. He also taught that He would rise from the dead on the third day. Jesus kept those promises. He kept his face turned towards Jerusalem and went and died on the cross. He battled Satan, sin, and death as he Suffered immensely on the cross. He not only died for you. He also conquered death for you as He declared victory in Hell and came out of the tomb alive. Jesus is your true Savior.

With the New Exodus, Jesus departed the tomb. HE returned to life. He also promises our own exodus, that one day we will be raised to glory, and we will be rescued from the Egypt of this world, where Satan is the Pharaoh that keeps us from one hundred percent following our Lord.

When our Exodus comes, there will be a day when those that don't believe are crushed and our thrown into the fires...and they will have to deal with the full wrath of God. The flashy Jesus who shines in glory on the mountain will terrify them. We however will see the glory of God and rejoice that He has come to take us to live in both body and soul forever.

Transfiguration prepares us for the valley of Lent. It's still the Epiphany Season where our Lord is revealed to us. It also is the hinge to Lent. Today, we must come down from the mountain and enter into the valley. Today we must bid farewell to the Alleluia as we enter the valley. Over the next six weeks we will consider the journey Jesus made for us to Jerusalem and ultimately the cross and empty tomb. We will consider our sin, we will confess our sin. We will repent.

Even as we our up on the mountain top of the Transfiguration, it's here we hear the theme of Lent, the journey to the cross. We hear it from Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. We ultimately hear it from the Father himself. So let's come down the mountain and into the valley of Lent so that we may keep Thine Easter when it appears. Let's come down the mountain into the valley of Lent so that we may hear once again the good news of Jesus' sufferings, death, and resurrection. The good news that He did it all for you and your salvation as the Exodus (Passover) Lamb. In Jesus Name. Alleluia! Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Is 42:1). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.