

**“It Is Good For Us to Be Here!”**

The Transfiguration of our Lord was what we might call a high point in several ways. It was literally high as it took place up on a high mountain where Jesus had gone with some of his disciples. It was a high point in more figurative ways, too. There on the mountain, Jesus and his disciples were far away from the diseases and demon possession with which they dealt so often during his earthly ministry. There were no other people to misunderstand Jesus’ purpose or to cloud his teaching, no people to distract the attention away from what was important. There was only Jesus and the three of his closest disciples, Peter, James, and John. It was a high point because there on the high mountain was only glory. There Jesus and those few disciples were joined by ancient heroes of faith and ministry. It is hard to imagine for those disciples a higher point than to be at that place at that time.

But even then, even at this highest of high points, the disciples didn’t quite know what to do with it. They were still afraid and uncertain. They definitely didn’t know what to say. So then Peter said the one thing that he could think of: **“It is good for us to be here.”** In his confusion and fear and uncertainty, Peter may not have even realized how true his words were. We echo those words today. It is good for us to be here, to be in God’s Word and at his church, to visit the mountain of transfiguration along with those blessed disciples. It is good for us to be here to see Jesus’ glory and to prepare for Jesus’ suffering.

It was good for the disciples to see Jesus’ glory. That’s exactly what happened on that special mountain. Six days after speaking to his disciples about the fact that he would suffer and die and the fact that following him would mean trouble and hardship, Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up the mountain. And there things changed. There he changed. Instead of looking very much like any other human being, Jesus’ appearance changed. Even his clothing changed. Mark focuses on that clothing being whiter than anyone could bleach it, but we know from other Gospel accounts that Jesus’ face shone with a heavenly brightness, too. This was a little glimpse of heaven shining forth on earth. This was a chance for those disciples to see Jesus as he is, with the glory that he always has and that he always had.

And as if that weren’t enough, there was more that the disciples were allowed to see. Moses appeared with Jesus on the mountain, and Elijah as well. From their perspective as forgiven saints, now enjoying the blessings of eternal life, they spoke with Jesus about what was coming. Another piece of heaven was peeking out on earth.

It was good for the disciples to be there to see this glory. It was good even though they became afraid. Our text tells us plainly that they were frightened. And that is such a natural reaction. When sinful human beings see this perfect heavenly glory, it terrifies. It demonstrates so plainly the difference between that heavenly light and the darkness of our sins. Peter, James, and John, as blessed as they were not only to follow Jesus and learn from him, but even to witness so many unique situations and circumstances with Jesus, as blessed as they were, they were sinners. They knew it. They knew that from themselves they could not shine in heavenly glory. They could only hide their faces in fear.

But this was good, too. It was good for the disciples to learn that the glory was for them. Jesus wasn’t transfigured in order to frighten them. He wasn’t transfigured to terrify or to punish them. He was transfigured to teach them and prepare them and give them the reassurance of who is and what he had come to do. He is and was the true Son of God come to be a sacrifice for them, come to take away the darkness of their sins and to make them shine in heavenly glory.

The transfiguration is such a unique scene because this glory was otherwise so hidden in Jesus’ ministry. This had never happened before. Yes, they had seen, along with other people, the moments of miracles. They had seen tiny glimpses the glory and the power and the majesty of Jesus. But on the mountain it was glowing and radiating. It was impossible to miss. But even in this event the glory of Jesus is hidden in so many ways. He revealed it only to those three inner circle disciples. He did not reveal it to the world. And that glory was shared in a way that they could take it in and be in awe of it. It could not be the full and unhindered glory of God. That would have been too much for any sinful human to take in.

They did take it in. They saw on display before them that Jesus their master was and is the true God. He shines with a brightness and a glory that is his own, not borrowed from anyone else, not false or fake in any way. It was a glory that they would never forget. Peter later wrote to other Christians, “**we were eyewitnesses of his majesty**” (2 Peter 1:16). God himself had come to save him, had come to save them. He has come to save us.

It is good for us to see Jesus’ glory, too. We have the eyewitness account of Peter. We have the spirit-inspired testimony of the gospel writers. We have seen the glory shine forth in Jesus’ Transfiguration. It is good for us to consider that he is indeed much more than a mere man. He is true God who shines with his own perfect glory. He is the very Son of God on whom the Father’s stamp of approval is once more placed: “**This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!**”

That’s one of the reasons it is good for us to be here, in church. Here we see his glory as we share his Word together. Here we grow in our faith and in our knowledge. Here we climb the mountain with Jesus to bask in glimpse after glimpse of heaven piercing through into our dark world and our dark lives. And it doesn’t have to stop here either! We can bask in the glory of Jesus every time we read and study and meditate on his Word on our own wherever we are!

It is good for us even though we should be afraid. We should tremble with the same fear with which the disciples did –knowing that our lives are so darkened with sin that they cannot bear the bright light of perfection. But through Jesus his Son, God makes us ready to see his glory. He takes away our sins by nailing them with Jesus to the cross to die for them. He proclaims the glory of his name through an empty tomb from which Jesus has risen to life again. It is good for us, in fact, there is nothing better for us than to see the glory of our Savior Jesus!

But life on this earth is not all glory. It is not all mountaintop. It is not all high points. There are low valleys to come. There are challenges to overcome, temptations to fight, and hardships to endure. And so we bask in the moments of glory to prepare us to face the periods of pain or discomfort or loss.

That is what the Transfiguration provided for the disciples. It was good for them to be there to prepare for Jesus’ suffering. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus speaks about his suffering and death right before we jump ahead to what happened on the mountain. This high point in their lives would help them get through, and allow them to help others get through, the low points that were coming. They would see Jesus arrested and beaten and whipped and nailed to a cross and killed. They would come face-to-face with their own shortcomings as they would run away and deny their Lord. They would be facing a crisis in life about what they believed and even who they were. And Jesus knew it, so he prepared them by giving them this special moment.

It is good for us to be here to look at the Transfiguration before we begin a Lenten journey to the cross. It is useful for us to keep in mind the glorious truth about Jesus as we watch and witness his suffering and his death. It is a part of the ebb and flow of the Christian Church Year that we have seasons and festivals like this, the ups and the downs of ministry and of Jesus’ own experience.

And it is good for us to work through these things because they mirror our lives. You know as well as I do that there will be down times. There will be sicknesses, there will be challenges. You will lose people close to you for one reason or another. Like all Christians, you must go through hardships, many hardships, on your journey toward heaven. And in those moments when Jesus’ glory is hardest to see, in those moments when your connection to that glory seems to have completely disappeared, you have something to look back on. You have your mountaintop. You can look again at the glory of God revealed in his Word. You can recall the promises shared in liturgy and sermon and song week by week.

Peter didn’t know what to say. He was frightened. And yet he spoke words that were profound and true: “**Rabbi, it is good for us to be here.**” But Peter couldn’t go through with the rest of his plans. The disciples couldn’t stay there, and neither could Jesus. There was work still to be done. There were sufferings still to face. Neither can we spend all our time basking in the glory of worship and Bible study, in the high points of our lives. There is still work to do, there are still sufferings to face. But as often as we have the opportunity, it is good to be here.

The Text: Mark 9:2–9 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.