

TRANSFIGURATION GLORY

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ August 21, 2016



² 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. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹ 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.

I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain,

How many of you have enjoyed watching the Olympic Games? I know I have, especially after I missed most of the first week of the games, I have been getting my fill this past week. It's especially nice when you're able to look past the distractions and focus on the athletes themselves and their accomplishments. You have the swimmers like Katie Ledecky & Michael Phelps distancing themselves from the competition. You have the track athletes like Usain Bolt, Ashton Eaton and Allison Felix, not to mention the volleyball, the water polo, the field hockey, the diving teams. And now we're getting ready to say farewell to the Olympic Games for a few years. The closing ceremony will be tonight where we will get one last glimpse of Rio.

But what about tomorrow? There may be some lingering memories of some event we watched, but for the most part, our thoughts will turn to other things – the start of the NFL season, the political races, school events and activities. For the most part, we will forget about the Olympic Games, we won't be as interested in a swimming event, track & field, or many other Olympic sports, at least not until they come on again in four years.

It is that attitude that reveals itself all too often among Christians, even well-meaning Christians, as well. It's the excitement or edification that comes when we find ourselves in a worship service, or involved in a church activity (like the Kid's Carnival this weekend). We're excited about it and wish it could be like this all the time, but when the moment is gone, it's gone. Too soon we leave these seats and consider little of what the pastor said in his sermon. Too soon do we get beyond the church event and we're looking for the next thing to stimulate us. I'm not saying this happens all the time, but we would be fooling ourselves if we don't think this ever happens either.

I can't help but think this is what was going on in the minds of Jesus' three disciples, Peter, James and John, as they were descending the Mountain of Transfiguration, the Mountain of Glory. While they were up on that mountaintop they were excited to be there, they wanted to stay there longer, but no sooner had they left the mountain that they thought their lives would be the same.

That's one thing we need to understand about God and his Word. We need to understand that God and his Word do not leave things the same way he found them. Instead, he changes them. It is a change that is apparent whether or not we observe something spectacular. This is what TRANSFIGURATION GLORY teaches us.

1. Visible glory which was always there
2. Invisible glory which still remains

(1)

As we get further along in our Mountaintop Experiences we come to an experience that certainly has to be one of the most glorious, one of the most special. It transpired near the end of Jesus' ministry on the earth. In fact, less than six months later he would be crucified outside of Jerusalem. But on this mountain, at this time, he was no less than glorious.

Like he had done on several occasions before, he only took up three of his disciples to witness this amazing sight. When they had been climbing up this mountain for a couple hours, Jesus stopped to pray. But he did more than just pray, he was transfigured before them. In short, that word "transfigured" means Jesus changed. Any other day, Jesus would have looked just like you or me – typical skin color, typical hair color, typical clothes. You wouldn't be able to pick him out of a crowd. But on this mountain, he was changed, he was transfigured. He showed his TRANSFIGURATION GLORY. But beyond that, two others appeared with him – Mark identifies them as Moses and Elijah. Both of these men played significant roles for God in the Old Testament. And there they spoke, they spoke about what was to come.

Peter was dumbfounded, scared, but also excited. And he blurts out to Jesus, "**Lord, it's good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters.**" He wanted the moment to continue, even though he was scared. He saw Jesus' glory and didn't want to come down the mountainside, perhaps similar to the way we feel when we are a part of something amazing. But there was one thing that Peter didn't understand yet about TRANSFIGURATION GLORY. What Peter was seeing now, this visible glory, it was visible glory which was always there.

You see, it's not like Jesus was void of glory before, it's not like Jesus was only the Son of God when he was displayed in this visible glory. This was a glory, this was a power, this was a majesty that Jesus had all along. We see small pieces of evidence with the miracles he did and the words he spoke. As amazing as those miracles would have been, as amazing as it would have been to hear Jesus speak, all of this was only a small part of his glory. Glory that was his all along, glory that was there all along, even before he was transfigured before them.

This visible glorious showing that Jesus was giving to his three disciples was not just for Jesus' benefit and strengthening, but it was also for the benefit and strengthening of his disciples as well. The disciples knew that Jesus was special, they believed him to be the Savior promised from God, but nothing could have prepared them for how Jesus was changed. What a reminder this would give them as they would see what Jesus would have to put up with on his way to the cross. It could be easy to think that Jesus was not powerful enough to stop what happened to him. But when the

disciples saw this, they knew Jesus had the power to stop what happened to him. But it's the fact that he didn't make what Jesus did even more special.

Jesus still had his power and glory when he went to the cross. He had it but didn't use it, because him going to the cross was the only way we could be won back from the grave and hell. It was only after this that the disciples realized everything. It's what caused Peter in our second lesson to write, **"We did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."**

(2)

But as suddenly as Jesus was transfigured with Moses and Elijah standing beside him, it was gone. First, **"a cloud appeared and covered them."** Then a voice from the cloud declaring, **"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"** Then **"suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus."** Perhaps all of these events took less than a minute, and then "poof" life was back to normal. There didn't appear to be a visible TRANSFIGURATION GLORY.

But once again, looks can be deceiving. The TRANSFIGURATION GLORY was still there, it was invisible glory that still remains. Just like Jesus wasn't void of glory before he was transfigured, so he did not lose his glory after he was transfigured. The TRANSFIGURATION GLORY was still there, it was just not visible to the physical eye. That makes sense, right? Jesus was the same person – fully man and fully God – on the Mount of Transfiguration as he was on the cross. And what a blessing that is.

That is the blessing that I encourage you to take with you this morning as you leave church. Because it can be so easy to get lost in our own little worlds. It's easy to get lost in our own little problems. It's easy to get lost in our own lives. We can forget about the blessing that Jesus is. We tend to forget the TRANSFIGURED GLORY Jesus showed up on the mountain – with his clothes and skin glistening white. We can tend to forget the Jesus who went to the cross, when we complain about our lot in life or the state of our world.

But Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. And the same Jesus who was in TRANSFIGURED GLORY up on the mountain, is the same Jesus who went to the cross not just to pay for your sins, but to pay for those sins of doubt, to pay for those sins of worry. He is the same Jesus who is looking after you today no matter what circumstance you are in.

And remember how I said that God does not leave things the way he found them? He hasn't left you the way he found you either. Christ has saved you. Christ has changed you. He sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to believe in him as your Savior. He has given you the ability and desire to follow him. This makes you special, this makes you different. You may not look special, you may not stand out in a crowd, but you are special and different nonetheless. You are special and different because you are a blood-bought child of God.

Jesus' TRANSFIGURATION GLORY is present in you. It is a glory that you have been given the privilege to carry with you from here this morning. In another part of the Bible, the Apostle Paul writes, **"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** We glorify God every time we worship him, every time we hear his Word and listen to him. We glorify God when

we perform our daily tasks – whether it be school, work or retirement to the best of our abilities he gave us. We glorify God when we eat, we glorify God when we play, we can glorify God when we tell others about him.

The Olympics may be over today. Tomorrow many will go back to their pre-Olympic lives. Church will be over here shortly, but I pray you don't go back to your pre-church lives. Jesus is too important for that, Jesus is too glorious for that. I pray that instead of just being like a spectator of the Olympics, you be like an Olympic athlete instead. Consider your life as completely dedicated to your Savior. But we are not the attraction, Jesus is. And we don't have to wait four years to see Jesus' glory again, we can see it again next week here in worship. Because Jesus' TRANSFIGURATION GLORY was visible glory that was always there, and invisible glory that still remains. Amen.