

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

The Mount of Transfiguration—Jesus Shows His Glory

Dear Friends in Christ,

I don’t know about your house, but the Olympics have been on A LOT at our place. My wife has put up with us guys watching all kinds of stuff all summer with the warning that for the two weeks of the Olympics, the TV is hers! So, we’ve seen A LOT of the Olympics. If you’ve been watching too, you’ve seen some spectacular things. And if you haven’t, let me mention a few that you’ve missed.

Shaunae Miller from the Bahamas dove over the finish line of the 400-meter hurdles to barely beat out the reigning world-champion Allyson Felix from the U.S. That was a gold medal dive that was really only able to be seen well by pausing the video of the race.

A commentator for gymnastics talked about a possible penalty for a young woman who crossed her feet as she flew through the air toward the ground. His point was that the judges could not possibly have seen that live so they, technically, should not be allowed to deduct any points for it. What you could see when the film was paused was not to be factored into the scoring.

And what shock it was to see Simone Manuel from the United States and Penny Oleksiak of Canada touch the wall of the pool *at the same time* to finish the 100-meter freestyle! It was impossible to be sure when you saw it live, but once they replayed the finish and paused it, you could see the simultaneous touch that resulted in a glorious, shining moment for both women.

There’s something to be said for witnessing an impressive event as it happens. But how great it is to be able to pause, so that you can really take in what was happening!

The Apostle Peter would have liked a “pause” button that worked in real life—one that would have just stopped the action and kept him and the others in the moment. He was so impressed by the Mountaintop Experience that was Jesus’ Transfiguration, that he wanted the world to stop and the moment to last longer. You see, he and two friends got to see Jesus as true God in a whole new and unexpected way. Oh, how he wanted to press the pause button and make time stand still!

As we hike up the mountain with Jesus and back down again, we’ll consider what happened with him and the impression it made on Peter especially. As we do that, I’d like you to think about this: **HOW DOES THE LORD’S GLORY IMPRESS YOU?**

I don’t know how you read your Bible or how you go about studying parts of it, but the headings that break up the chapters can be very useful to establish the context of what you are reading. For example, our Mountaintop Experience today takes us to the Mount of Transfiguration. But it can be helpful to simply page back a few chapters and read the headings to see what has gone on prior to the Transfiguration. If you do that, you’ll find that the disciples had seen Jesus—true God and true man—in action quite a bit.

They heard him teaching with parables like the Sower and the Seed.
They watched as he called out for a sea storm to stop.
They witnessed Jesus commanding demons to leave the bodies of people.
Peter, James and John were allowed to follow Jesus into a home where he gently spoke to a dead little girl, saying, *“Talitha koum”*—*“Little girl, I say to you ‘get up’.*”
The disciples saw Jesus make dinner for more than 5,000 people out of 5 little loaves of bread and 2 fish.
They could hardly believe their eyes as Jesus walked on top of the water of the Sea of Galilee.
And they saw a man who could not see be given sight by Jesus.

So, it wouldn't be right to say that they had not seen the glory of Jesus or that they were unaware of his divinity. But about a week after telling his disciples that he would suffer and die and rise again, Jesus gave a few of his followers a totally different look at his divine nature. Peter, James and John—the inner circle of Jesus friends and followers—were led by Jesus to an isolated spot on a mountain. And the Lord revealed his glory.

It says that Jesus was “transfigured” before them—that he underwent a “metamorphosis”. He showed a part of him that had not been seen before in this way. Those men were accustomed to seeing Jesus, the human being, doing things that only God could do, but this showed Jesus in a whole new way. **His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.** Matthew says **Jesus' face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light (17:2).** Luke tells us that **His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning (9:29).** Dazzling...bleach...the sun...lightning!

What was this brightness? What did it mean? This is divine brilliance! This is the glory of the Lord! Back in Old Testament times, Moses saw the holy light of God's presence—in some measure. You may recall the time he was up on Mt. Sinai meeting with God and when he came down Moses himself was still, literally, glowing from being in God's presence! He was so radiant that the people were afraid to approach him—and he was just a reflection of the Lord's brightness (Ex. 34:30)! Interesting that Moses is one of the two saints to appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus revealed his divine glory to Peter, James and John!

The other person to appear there was Elijah. He did not experience earthly death, but was carried by God into heaven by a bright and glorious chariot of fire (2 Kings 2). Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus when he was transfigured. How did that happen? Why did that happen? How did the disciples recognize them? Honestly, we can't be absolutely sure how to answer those things, so we're not going to dwell on them this morning. But their presence added to the glorious nature of that shining moment when Jesus revealed his holiness to his disciples.

And just in case there was still any question about who Jesus was, the holy and glorious voice of God the Father spoke through the filter of a cloud: **“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”** Jesus is the Son of God, loved by the Father because of his work as the world's Savior, and the Father commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus because he was true God! There is no doubt that those men were given an amazing privilege to see the glory of Jesus on that mountain.

The outspoken leader of the disciples, Peter, couldn't contain himself—as usual! He had to say something, so he blurted out: **“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.”** Peter wanted to hit the “pause” button! He wanted to put up tents so that the six of them could hang out for a while and the disciples could enjoy this divine moment! Why would you not want to have that moment last and last?! To see an overwhelming display of godly glory—a brilliant holiness emanating from Jesus—must have been incredible! To see Moses and Elijah must also have been faith-inspiring! And to hear God the Father speak out loud to you? Can you even imagine?! You can hardly blame Peter!

And can you imagine keeping this to yourself after Moses and Elijah disappeared, the cloud dissipated, the Father stopped talking, and the brilliant glory of Jesus was again cloaked in his humanity? How could you not run—stumbling and tripping down the mountainside—and tell at least your best disciple friend, if not everyone you met?! But God tells us that they managed to keep it to themselves until after Jesus' resurrection—maybe 6 months later! That was how those men who were there responded to Jesus' glory. You and I have seen Jesus' glory too:

- When we hear the Words of God in the Bible and it tells us about Jesus being true man in every way like us—except without sin—we see *his glory through the eyes of faith*.
- When we hear how the love of Jesus prompted him to offer his perfect self on the cross to pay for the world's sin—we see *his glory through the eyes of faith*.
- When we hear how Jesus busted through the chains of death and rose to life again as our Champion—we see *his glory through the eyes of faith*.
- When we hear Jesus tell us that he is with us as we go through life and present among us when we gather in his name—we see *his glory through the eyes of faith*.

HOW DOES THE LORD'S GLORY IMPRESS YOU? This is a very personal question, isn't it? James couldn't answer for Peter, and John couldn't answer for James. Because Peter had a big mouth and wasn't afraid to use it, we get to hear how it impressed him. He wanted to hit the "pause" button and stay right there basking in the glory of Jesus! So now we are able to open our Bibles and read this account, along with everything else it tells us about Jesus. As we think about Jesus today then, HOW DOES THE LORD'S GLORY IMPRESS YOU?

- Well, if today is the first day you've heard some of this about Jesus, I guess you'll see what impact it has on you in the next hours and days and weeks.
- If you've been coming back to God's house for a few weeks or a few decades, the glory of Jesus has touched your heart and you want to know him better and worship him with songs and prayers and offerings.
- If you've been baptized, the seal of the Holy Spirit has made an impression on you and marked you as God's child.
- If you are a confirmed member of Grace, then certainly Jesus' glory has made an impression on you because you stood up in front of God and his people and declared your faith in him. And he continues to impress you with forgiveness and strength as you go regularly to the Lord's Supper.
- If you have found a way or two to use your spiritual gifts and talents to serve God and his people, then you have been impressed with the Lord's glory so much so that it actually makes a difference in your life because you're willing to give up yourself, your time, your money—anything at all—if it means furthering the Lord's kingdom and work.

We are impressed with Jesus' glory when we are personally touched by him as we come to see him and to know him through the words of the Bible.

As I've been moving out of my office to make room for Pastor Patoka, I've been going through my papers and books, trying to purge a little. As I've done that, I've noticed that in some of the books, my personal seal, made by this embosser, has become flattened out, dull and hardly distinguishable because of time and pressure. What used to be a clean and crisp impression, isn't so much anymore.

That can happen to a Christian too. We're excited about getting to know our Savior, seeing the Lord's glory, and it makes a deep impression on us. But over time and because of the pressures of life, that impression can be dulled and even almost indistinguishable. We can become less impressed with the glorious Lord, the Savior of the world, true God—omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, full of love and compassion and righteousness and shining holiness!

This Mountaintop Experience gives us the change to review who Jesus is—true man and true God—the Son of the Heavenly Father and partner with the Holy Spirit. His glory can make an impression on us again. Today, as we come before him in repentance, Jesus forgives our sins of not appreciating his glory, for letting that impression become dulled, for taking him for granted. And with his forgiveness, we have the promise of eternal life in heaven. We can take comfort in and be excited about that day when our Lord calls us out of this world and into the full brightness of his shining glory around his throne!

It's worth not only hitting the "pause" button, but hitting the "replay" button so that we can review the blessed events on the Mount of Transfiguration every once in a while. Because then that impression of the glorious Jesus can be renewed in us.

That's exactly what Peter did, by the way. He replayed this Mountaintop Experience as he wrote about it 30 years after he witnessed it. And the words from his pen still inspire us today when we read 2 Peter 1:16-18: **We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.**

You have seen Jesus' glory too. As those men treasured seeing the Lord's glory at his Transfiguration and replayed those events in their minds and as they wrote and spoke to others, I encourage you to do the same—for the good of your soul and as a witness to others so that they too might be impressed by Jesus' glory and find their salvation in him. Amen.

Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.