

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

Today as we dedicate our new organ to the glory of God and fully intend to use it for many years, Lord willing, to glorify Him in song, confession, prayer, and praise, God gives us a glimpse of His glory. But notice how even now He does so in a hidden way. He did not do this when the five thousand pressed around Him. He did not do it on Palm Sunday as the pilgrim throng shouted halleluiahs. He did not do it as a show of might in the midst of His passion on Good Friday. No, just as He will do on Maundy Thursday when He prays, He withdrew for this special occasion, taking with Him only a few dearly beloved apostles. And notice how Peter delighted at the sight. This was what they had been waiting for! But we know how Good Friday nips at Transfiguration's heels. The Gospels tell us that after this He set His face on Jerusalem. He resolved to approach with each step closer to His cross and our redemption.

Transfiguration reminds us what our Lord left behind and gave up to save us. It reminds us that He wasn't just some zealot with nothing to live for, but rather He was God Himself with sinners to die for, for me and for you. Next time you go from a high to a low on the rollercoaster of life, remember that your God doesn't have to speculate what that is like. No, He's gone from heaven to Calvary, from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. Next time you hesitate to love for fear that you might be loved back, know that your Christ has loved you in just that way, even when you were hostile to Him in sin, and let that be your motivation, example, and guide.

We haven't heard our God speak as He did at the transfiguration of our Lord, but we have His living voice in His Word, nonetheless. And this Word is reliable. As God spoke at our Lord's transfiguration, so also He still speaks through the Holy Scriptures. And His Word isn't a puzzle. It's understandable, even if some passages take work. And no, you don't need to interpret it. It interprets itself. Notice what Peter says in our second lesson: ***“And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”***

Yes, we must pay attention to the grammar, and yes, a knowledge of biblical history is very useful, but nothing is so beneficial for the study of Scripture as Scripture, and everything we need to know for our salvation is presented there as clear as day, as we see today: *I AM*, Jehovah, who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, has left His heavenly throne to receive our crown of thorns, left behind every heavenly blessing to bear our curse and be hung on a tree so that by His death that cross has become for us a tree of life, whose fruit we taste in the Sacrament as a foretaste of the eternal feast that awaits.

And why? Not because we've deserved it, and not because we can ever return the favor, but because He loves us. And why does He love us? Let's see if I've drilled it into you yet. Why does He love us? He loves us because He does, and there is great comfort in that. His love for us is trustworthy or certain because it is not rooted in our worthiness or His emotions but in His very nature as God, in the fact that He is merciful and compassionate, kind and good. He has become true man to endure every mockery and lash, thorn and nail. Yet as we watch Him do so, do not forget, as we see today, that He is also true God, so that the blood He sheds abounds for the salvation of all who believe. Even as He appears weak in the weeks to come, He is strong to save, the Creator given in sacrifice to ransom His creatures. And that is a truth worth sounding the organ and lifting our voices in thankfulness and praise! Amen.