

February 19th, 2023

## **Jesus Revealed in the Majestic, and Mundane**

Luke Bushman, Matthew 17:1-9; 2 Peter 1:16-21

### **Matthew 17:1-9 (NIV)**

**After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.**

**4 Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”**

**5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”**

**6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” 8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.**

**9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”**

### **1 Peter 1:16-21 (NIV)**

**16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 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.”[a] 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.**

**19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

We have been in the season of Epiphany since January 6th. On that day we celebrated the Wise Men’s revelation that a baby named Jesus was the Messiah. We use the symbolism of light a lot during the Epiphany season, because light makes the unseen and hidden seen. We celebrate the fact that God chose to reveal himself to humanity as Jesus Christ. Some people such as the

Wise Men realized the significance of Jesus instantly, but overall this revelation of Jesus as Messiah was a process that took time. Jesus did not have a mass following until much later in life, and even those closest to Jesus took some time before they realized they were walking with the light of the world. When I was thinking about light, epiphany, and the revelation of Jesus, I just kept picturing a dimmer switch that someone slowly turns up. From total darkness to blinding light. We started with a star guiding the wisemen to a young Jesus, and today we talk about the Transfiguration- a moment where Jesus' full majesty and glory is revealed. From a small star in the distance, to a blinding light in your face. I think this is a suitable end to the Epiphany season as we transition into the Lent season starting next week.

This morning we have read two texts that I want to focus on; the Transfiguration account in Matthew, and Peter's reference to this event while discussing the validity of the gospel he preached.

The story begins as most stories do in the Bible. With people going up a mountain. Apparently they liked a good thigh workout. Jesus takes with him three disciples; Peter, James and John. In many commentaries this is referred to as the "Inner Circle". King David also had an inner circle of three, but Jesus' circle is not renowned for their combat abilities and violence(Schuller). This is the first of many allusions to Old Testament characters and concepts. Upon reaching the top of the mountain Jesus is transfigured- he becomes brighter than those LED Headlights that always blind you when you drive at night.

In addition to Jesus radiating bright light, Moses and Elijah appear alongside Jesus. Moses and Elijah were major figures in the Old Testament, and so their appearance here is significant. There is some debate about what that significance is, most likely they are here because they are seen as figures who preceded Jesus, who also suffered for their faith(Schuller). The main point however, is clearly that Jesus is supreme over these two faith heroes (Geddert). This supremacy is made clear when a voice from heaven proclaims "**This is my own, my beloved, on whom my favor rests. Listen to him!**". This proclamation is almost identical to the one made at Jesus' baptism, except here there is also a command. Listen to him. Experiencing the revelation of Jesus is not enough, they are also to listen to the Messiah revealed (Geddert).

The disciples fall down in fear, and when they open their eyes it is just Jesus standing with them. Eileen Schuller sums this up perfectly: "The heavenly visitors depart, but Jesus stays—Jesus alone. Without heavenly companions, without heavenly glory, he is the "tabernacle" (skēnē), the reality of God's abiding presence with us (cf. 1:23; 28:20). The disciples descend from the mountain into the mundane world of suffering and mission, accompanied by Jesus, God with us." (Schuller)

That is what they do next. They go down the mountain and go about their “regular” business. Their business is hardly regular by my standards, since Jesus descends the mountain and casts out a demon, but they go from a mountaintop experience back into the ordinary, broken reality they are used to. I want to pause here and look at a painting. I also want to preface this by saying that I am no art connoisseur or critic. While I was researching the Transfiguration, repeatedly this one painting would come up. (Show Painting)



This is the Transfiguration, a painting completed by Raphael in around 1520, around the time of his death. For many years this was considered the most important painting in the world, but eventually the criticism it drew snowballed, and critics began to favor more recognizable works like the Mona Lisa. The main criticism about the painting was that it looked like a painting split into two sections. The top half and the bottom half contrast one another, and the focus is not necessarily on the Christ figure. An art critic named Johann Wolfgang von Goethe issued a counter criticism, where he considered the upper and lower portions as complementary to one another.

I personally, with no knowledge of art whatsoever, think that the clear contrast between the top half and the bottom half says something powerful. That the powerful, marvelous man, who radiates light at the top of the painting, is the same man who steps down into the darkness and chaos we see in the lower portion of the painting.

The other text that we encountered today is found in 2 Peter 1:16-21.

In this piece of scripture Peter discusses the validity of the gospel he has preached. He talks about how what he preaches is not a cleverly made up story, but is in fact an eyewitness account of Jesus' majesty. Peter specifically references his time with Jesus on the mountain, when they heard the voice of God and saw Jesus Transfigured. This event stuck with Peter, and is something that he carried with him as he preached the gospel. His eyewitness account is supported by the prophetic messages that have been passed on throughout history. Verse 19 says **"We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."**

In this piece of scripture Peter discusses the validity of the gospel he has preached. He talks about how what he preaches is not a cleverly made up story, but is in fact an eyewitness account of Jesus' majesty. Peter specifically references his time with Jesus on the mountain, when they heard the voice of God and saw Jesus Transfigured. This event stuck with Peter, and is something that he carried with him as he preached the gospel. His eyewitness account is supported by the prophetic messages that have been passed on throughout history. Verse 19 says **"We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."**

Jesus was revealed to Peter when he was Transfigured on that mountain. Jesus was also revealed to Peter as they went about their lives together, walking through the mundane world full of suffering. And trying to make it better. Peter is now trying to reveal Jesus to others, telling them of the times he witnessed the goodness of Jesus. Jesus is revealed to people, and they in turn reveal Jesus to others. Sometimes these revelations are majestic, obvious, and feel surreal. Sometimes these revelations are much more mundane. We see Jesus in the most ordinary parts of our lives. Jesus is revealed to us in the simple interactions we have, where his spirit and attitude is exemplified by his creation. When has Jesus been revealed to you? Have you experienced a majestic, dramatic revelation of Jesus? Or has Jesus revealed himself through the people around you that you interact with? Or through the nature you see when you look at the window? Perhaps a new aspect of Jesus' character is revealed to you when you read scripture. Jesus is revealed to us in the majestic, and in the mundane. We find Jesus in our mountaintop experiences outside of the norm, and in our daily strolls through a suffering world in need of love. I encourage us to practice sharing the times we have seen Jesus with one another. Pausing on occasion to think about the times we felt Jesus revealed to us, enables us to uplift one another with stories full of

love, goodness, patience, providence, healing, reconciliation and all the other wonderful aspects of Jesus.

I felt the compassion and empathy of Jesus revealed to me through a good friend a while back. I was having a very anxious, and tough day. I decided to reach out to my friend, but I was too afraid of being a burden to them. I decided not to say what was going on, and simply ask them to hangout in the near future. I wasn't going to bring anything up, I just figured it would be good for me to be around people. Unexpectedly my friend immediately read through my attempts to come across peachy, and asked if I was okay. We chatted a bit, and when we got together for lunch a few days later, they made a distinct effort to check in again, and talk through what I was feeling in person. I felt the love and care of Jesus, in putting my friend in my life as a comfort.

I encourage you if you have similar stories to share them with one another, and to regularly pause, and think about how Jesus is revealing himself to you. It might be majestic or it might be mundane. Regardless, we can hope these stories will light up our dark world.

#### Resources:

Geddert, Timothy J. *Mark: Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Herald Press, 2001.

Schuller, Eileen M. *The New Interpreters Bible Commentary: The Gospels and Narrative Literature, Jesus and the Gospels, Matthew, and Mark. Vol. 7*, Abingdon Press, 2015.