

This morning, we are in the 16th week of a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus.” I have been making my way this year through Luke’s account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we will be in Luke 9:28-36, looking at the transfiguration of Jesus.

Now, because it’s important to read the Bible in context, remember that right before this passage, Jesus has asked His disciples who the people say that He is, and then who they say that He is. Peter answers that He is the Messiah, the anointed one sent by God to save His people. Right after that, Jesus says:

Luke 9:21–27 - Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” ²³ Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit **their very self?** ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

In the span of only a few verses here, Jesus has dropped a number of bombs. He is the Messiah. He is going to be betrayed and murdered. He will rise again. If they follow Him, they will suffer and probably die violently as well. And, He will come again in his glory. And some of them will see the kingdom before they die. Now that is a lot.

Eight days later, we have what could be an unexpected fulfillment of this prophecy about seeing His kingdom and glory before He dies:

Luke 9:28–36 - About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. ³¹ They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men **standing with him.** ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, 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 he was saying.)³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that **Jesus was alone**. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

This is certainly a very unique and powerful event. What is the significance of the transfiguration of Jesus?

1) Jesus is the divine redeemer

Luke 9:28–30 - About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.

He appears in glory, meeting with Moses and Elijah, two men who represent the law and the prophets, the entire Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. Unlike the radiance of Moses, where he was reflecting God’s glory, Jesus’ glory comes from within, because He is the divine Son of God.

Exodus 34:29 - When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

As Mark puts it:

Mark 9:2–3 - 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.

And what do they talk about?

Luke 9:31 - They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

The departure is the word for Exodus. Just as Moses rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt through the sacrificial death and blood of the lamb, Jesus is about to rescue the world from a greater slavery to sin, the devil, and death through his sacrificial death and the blood of the Lamb of God. **He is divine, and He is the redeemer.**

We don't know if Moses and Elijah were coming to encourage Jesus or if Jesus was telling them about the plan and how he was doing, but Peter, John and James, once they wake up, are clearly awestruck and don't quite know what to say or do:

Luke 9:32-33 - Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, 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 he was saying.)

Peter wants Moses and Elijah to stay, but in the end, Moses and Elijah depart, and Jesus remains, because Moses and Elijah are not necessary. Now that Jesus is here, the law and the prophets are not necessary. They fade away, and Jesus remains, for He is the way to be saved, and they point to Him.

As the writer of Hebrews put it:

Hebrews 1:3 - The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Jesus is the divine redeemer, and this experience nailed home the point to the disciples who witnessed it.

2) We would be wise to obey Him

Luke 9:34-36 - While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

The glory cloud, the Shekinah glory, appears, as it had on Mt. Sinai for Moses, as it had in the temple for Solomon.

1 Kings 8:10–11 - When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

And for the second time in the gospel, the disciples hear the audible voice of God the Father. At Jesus' baptism, we saw this:

Luke 3:21–22 - When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

And here, the words are spoken to the disciples: "The is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

He does not call Moses or Elijah "my son." He calls Jesus His Son. Because He is the greater Moses; see what Moses said in **Deuteronomy 18:15** - The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

This is my divine Son; listen to Him! Listen to what Jesus said about the importance of listening to Him and obeying what He said:

Matthew 7:24–27 - "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Read what He has said and put it into practice, and you will live wisely. And as you follow and obey Him, you glorify Him:

Matthew 5:14–16 - "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

By our praise and not just by our actions, we show God to be as valuable as He is.

The good news is that we do not need to hear the audible voice of God or literally follow Jesus the way the disciples did when they walked with him on the earth. Listen to what Peter has to say about this experience in his second letter:

2 Peter 1:16–21 - 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.” 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.

He calls the prophetic message completely reliable. After all, you might doubt that you heard an audible voice, but this is God’s reliable word written for us.

3) The promise of glory is an encouragement to persevere

Remember that Jesus has just told them that he will be murdered, and that they will likely experience suffering and death because of their association with Him. But He encourages them to not be ashamed of Him, but rather to stay faithful, for one day He will return for them. And then, to encourage them of the truth of His words, they experience this transfiguration of Jesus into glory.

The promise of future glory is meant to encourage us.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Romans 8:28–30 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those

God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

One day we will be conformed to the image of His Son. We will not only see His glory but share in His glory, an eternal glory that far outweighs any “light and momentary troubles.” A glory that helps us persevere, knowing that He is always at work for our good and for our ultimate glory. Glory is a very hard concept to put into words. After all, this is the ultimate “you had to be there” moment. But it refers to His beauty, His majesty, His perfection; it makes people joyful and full of love and praise and want to share in it. How can anyone put into words what effect it would have to experience Jesus in His glory?

The ultimate promise is that one day we will see God’s glory and share in His glory.

Revelation 21:23 - The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

And as Paul put it in Romans 8:30, we will not only see His glory, we ourselves will be glorified as He rids us of sin and conforms us to the image of His Son. The promise of the Bible is that one day we will be glorified as well, sharing in His glory. But what does that mean, and how does that encourage us? As C.S. Lewis put it, “Who wishes to become a kind of living electric light bulb?”

Lewis continues: “We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it... At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in... What would it be to taste at the fountainhead that stream of which even these lower reaches prove so intoxicating? Yet that, I believe, is what lies before us. The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy.”

We will experience His glory and enjoy Him forever. And we will be glorified. We will become like Jesus, and we will share in His glory. Again, listen to Lewis:

“It is written that we shall ‘stand before’ Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God... to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.”

Jesus is the divine redeemer. Listen to Him and obey Him! And be encouraged by the promise of future glory. And so, again, we proclaim with Paul:

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.