

“Transformed Exiles” | Rev. Josh Keller | Transfiguration Sunday (2/23/2020)

Exodus 24:12: 15-18

24:12 The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” ... **16** The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. **17** Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain ... **18**... And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. **14** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ... **5:6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. **8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 17:1-9

1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain ... **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, ... **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” *[Read the whole passage!]*

Intro Question What does it mean to be baptized into Exile?

As introduction, Josh summarized the theme of 1 Peter as that of being exiles, sojourning in a foreign land. When we are baptized into Christ, this is King Jesus claiming us as His own yet giving us only a glimpse into the future home that we will one day inhabit with him. He asked us to consider the experience of immigrants at Ellis Island, who in many cases gave up even their names as part of entering into a kind of exile in a new land.

Background

What is an exile? It is to experience change in all of its forms; cut off from our past life, but also cut off from the future life we had expected. At some level we all dread change, and Josh suggested that change is a “living death” – quoting from an immigrant who wrote “Things still exist, but you have to pretend they are dead.” Changes cause us to experience death in many ways ... to career, to our savings (and what we planned to do with it), to marriage (or to the marriage we hoped to have), to the hope of children, and to many other things of this world.

The Two Peters Consider the contrast between the Peter of Matthew 16 & 17 and the Peter who wrote 1 Peter. Consider Peter’s expectation (or demand) for the “safe” and the “perfect”; for the comfortable existence under Jesus’ reign with the Roman foreigners expelled. Then consider the reality of Peter’s life in exile – denying Christ 3 times and suffering as a “foreigner” under continued Roman rule. As Josh put it, the glory on the mountain is confirmed by the cross. The change in Peter’s life (and ours) takes place in the world to which we are exiled. Contrast this with the \$11B. self-help industry that promises pain-free change. God’s answer to our need is radical; His glory shining out through Jesus (and reflected in Moses) transforms us at the cross even as we deny Him (like Peter).

Living as Exiles

- Be sober. Don’t give in to the temptations of this world and become “drunk” with the false promises that it offers.
- Be awake. Recognize the “new shoots” springing up around you, pointing to the new creation that is not yet, but also already here.
- Be firm. Walk by faith and hold to the course that God has shown you; staying in the center of what He is doing in this world.

Discuss:

- 1.) Note that when Peter, James & John “fell on their faces”, they were as dead. It took the touch of Jesus, coming to them and commanding them to “rise and have no fear”. *How do we need to hear that message? What fears do we need to overcome with the help of Jesus?*
- 2.) Consider Moses, called up to the mountain on the 7th day, and the subsequent journey through the wilderness to the promised land, symbolized in our baptismal prayer shared on Sunday. How does the “7th day” theme play out for Peter in Matthew? And what does it mean for us?
- 3.) Consider that while we are exiles in this world, Jesus is at home “preparing a place for us” (having sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us). How does this help us bear up under the challenges of living in exile?

Conclusion/Application

How does Peter’s example give us strength to live as exiles in this world? Which of the three aspects listed above do you need to pray for in your life now? How can we pray for each other at All Saints in this respect?