

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation. These notes are edited, but not "book" ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity. Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: February 17, 2019

Sermon Title: The Transfiguring of Jesus Christ:
"The Brightest Light in Our Darkest Night"

Sermon Series: Matthew

Text: Matthew 17:1-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2019



Date: February 17, 2019

Title: Our Brightest Light in Our Darkest Night / The Empowering Vision of The Pre Incarnate Christ / Jesus; the Power and the Glory / Jesus; the fulfillment of all of God's Promises, Pictures, and Prophecies.

Text: Matthew 17:1-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21

Theme: Who Jesus is in His person and work enables us in our darkest moments.

Visuals:

1. Three tents pitched in the auditorium.
2. The hulk transforming
3. A movie trailer – a preview of what is to come
4. A video showing people's faces changing; morphing from a manger to a servant, to a crucified Jesus, to a resurrected reigning king.
5. The change is in form, not substance. From kenosis (Phil. 2) to glory
6. Intense carpenter lights; so bright you cannot look into them and so intense the heat from the lights will burn you. – No matter how dark the moments you are about to enter, Jesus is the light of the world.
7. [START THE SERVICE WITH THIS ON THE FRONT TABLE] A light bulb covered by a shade/can. Find an intense light that you cannot look at. Find a can drill holes in it. The light is his divinity. The can with holes is his humanity. You can see the divinity through the humanity, but it is covered. At the transfiguration the "can" is lifted and we see his divinity/glory.
8. "form" making jello or gummy bears or concrete sidewalks, etc. the form doesn't change what it is. The form only changes its appearance. Have little packets of gummy bears for the kids.
9. USE WITH HYPOSTATIC hand in a puppet; the puppet is a form. The hand appears like the form, but it isn't the form in substance. Jesus takes on the form of the puppet; at the transfiguration the form is lifted and we see the hand. In the cross event the form is crushed; but the hand will reemerge in glory.
10. USE WITH TENT – A SINGLE STORY WITH JESUS AT THE CENTER Dip a dry towel into a bucket of water and ring it out. The towel is fully saturated with the water and when you twist it, water comes out. The work of Jesus in our behalf is so full that we are now saturated with His person and work so that when we are wrung only gospel comes out.
11. [illustration - By passing the process when making chocolate chip cookies or gummy bears without sugar or sweetener; whatever it is, it isn't a chocolate chip cookie or a sweet and chewing gummy bear]
12. USE WITH THE TENSION If and when you clean your room, do your homework, and eat your "peas," then we will watch a show, play video games, and eat gummy bears. But first, if. You cannot bypass the process if you wish to enjoy the end. For the glory, you must have suffering, death, burial, and then resurrection. If you ask a child if they always or even sometimes feel like obeying their parents, they would probably say no. But if you ask them do you obey your parents, they will hopefully say yes because obeying your parents is right. Obeying your parents isn't an issue of whether or not you feel like it. Obedience is a choice and obeying your parents is right no matter how you feel.

13. The Bible is telling a single story with Jesus at the center. Use a wooden collapsing ruler. It keeps folding in on itself. It is a single means of measuring with many part. Use a tape measure. The spring is Jesus. Each inch is a book of the bible. The tape measurer is a single color and various marks. You can look at the detail or the whole, but it is the spring that makes is functional.

The Wheel

1. Why should you do this?
 - a. Unless you have a clear understanding of who Jesus is, you cannot be saved.
2. What do I need to do?
 - a. You need to accept Jesus as the God/man who can fulfill the SEED PROMISE and complete the BLOOD PICTURE.
3. How do I do this?
 - a. It is a step of faith; of the volition. It is not a mental exercise per se. No one is able to fully understand the relationship between His divine and human nature.
4. What can I expect when I do this?
 - a. If you accept Jesus as fully God and fully man, you will be able to have light in the darkest moments of your life.

Introduction:

- The “inner circle” of disciples were privy to a glimpse of our Lord’s pre-incarnate glory. This preview showed Him for what He is. It is to embolden them when He is disfigured by the cross.

Peter [need we say more?], James, and John [Mark 3:17; “Sons of Thunder”]

What made them “special?”

Why were they separated from the other nine? What did the other nine think and/or feel? Were the other disciples always pulling for position?

Why do we think the experience was because they were special or unique? Perhaps it is because they were the neediest and needed the experience, when they already had all they already needed?

We are always seeking the “sign,” the “experience.” We always want the vision or the voice. But is this really what we need in order to believe or can we simply accept what is written?

What does Peter say about this “experience?” (Cf. 2 Peter 1:16-21)

Have you ever seen something so spectacular that it took your breath away and perhaps even changed your life, if but for a moment? Do you remember what happened? You went back and perhaps shared with others that moment, that experience. But what began to happen over time? The memory of that experience begins to change, you forget some of the details, the impact is altered, and you begin to forget some of the details and make up others. The story contracts in some parts and expands in others [i.e. BIG FISH – I do not know about you, but I have encountered some of the best storytellers in this fellowship that I have ever met. They can tell a story and spin a yarn embedded in truth with such mastery as to keep me engaged over extended periods]. Well, Peter was at this event and he speaks of it as life altering, but he speaks

of something that is more certain more sure than his experience and that is the WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. I cannot stress this enough. What you feel must submit to what you think. Your experience must bow to the written word of God.

If you ask a child if they always or even sometimes feel like obeying their parents, they would probably say no. But if you ask them do you obey your parents, they will hopefully say yes because obeying your parents is right. Obeying your parents isn't an issue of whether or not you feel like it. Obedience is a choice and obeying your parents is right no matter how you feel.

This is one of those incredible passages that allow us to plunge the depths of God's process of going from where He was, to where He is, and then to where He will be.

"In the New Testament we read that it was because of the glory that was set before Him He was able to endure the cross. The revelation of Christ's glory in this chapter was a clear confirmation to the disciples of the truth of Peter's confession of faith (16:16); but it was also a great encouragement for Christ Himself as He faced the agony that would occur on another hill called Golgotha."¹

It would be interesting to know what conversations transpired in those six days following His revelation. Again, we are on a high mountain and exposed to His transfiguration. His disciples were allowed to see Him in His pre-incarnate glory. They were also witnesses to the voice of the Father. This is the same voice heard at His baptism in Matthew 3. Moses and Elijah speak of the Law and the Prophets. They are His attendants who wait on Him. At the end of the day, there is only Jesus and He alone is whom we are to listen.

The suppression of information by Jesus is always perplexing. There is a time and place for the revealing, but this point in time was neither the time nor place. John the Baptist is the precursor to the Son of Man arriving. John preached a message of repentance and restoration.

1. What is the author's structure of this passage? Please a) show sections with verse references, b) state the author's emphasis, and c) explain what strategies you used to see this structure.

Let us notice the sequence

The event / the disclosure of glory / - After six days (v. 1 [from what?])

The explanation / the command to conceal - And as they were coming down (v. 9)

The example / the demonstration of power - And when they came to the crowd (v. 14)

The son's face

The disciple's view

The father's voice

The disciples fear

1. The transfiguring [glory / Shekinah / Return]

First, the word deals with form / appearance.

Second, the hypostatic union. Although it will be beyond our ability to understand, the reason for the union is not.

- To give a very tangible, concrete expression of God (Gen. 3:8; John 14).
- To taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:9, 17).

2. The tents [Millennium / Rest / Sabbath]

Peter is working off the idea that some will see the “glory” before they taste death. Peter’s theology isn’t wrong, but his timing is.

Peter understood that when the Messiah returns, everything will be reconstituted and there will be heaven on earth, but to get where he wants to be, there must be “suffering.”

- When this comes to fruition, God’s kingdom will be on earth just as it is in heaven.
- Think THE LORD’S PRAYER
- Think “The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand”
- If this is the FEAST OF TABERNACLES, then the suffering has been bypassed.
- This was their theological / eschatological grid. The Messiah comes and sets things right.
- If Jesus is the Messiah, then . . . [glory]
- Peter’s rebuking of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi is happening and the devil is winning.
- Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.

3. The truth [suffering / exodus / my son . . .]

The complete Christ provides a satiating salvation. When you understand just how full-orbed this story is, what you begin to understand is just how permeating the gospel is in every area of your life. You do not circumvent elements of the *Story*. You embrace the *Story* because it is in the fullness of the *Story* that you and I taste and see that God is good.

4. The tension [do not tell anyone?]

The crowds [and His disciples] would want the kingdom and glory without the cross and suffering. However, you cannot have one without the other. The “right” of the kingdom is through the payment of suffering. The serpent’s seed is to “crush” the heel (Gen. 3:15); the innocent lamb is to shed its blood, die, and impute its act to the guilt parties (Gen. 3:21). Like Peter, this is not what we want to hear. We do not want to suffer for glory, but this is an unavoidable path if the people of God are to be rescued from sin and death and restored to glory and joy.

You and I cannot avoid or rush the process. God has a plan and that plan will be unfolded flawlessly even when that plan makes no sense to us. [illustration - By passing the process when making chocolate chip cookies or gummy bears without sugar or sweetener; whatever it is, it isn’t a chocolate chip cookie or a sweet and chewing gummy bear]

[Like Peter, we find that thought repugnant. We want to go from here to there without the suffering. But He can't and neither can we.]

Why Peter, James, and John? (v. 1)

Which high mountain are we talking about (v. 1)

What is meant by "transfiguration?" (v. 2)

Why Moses and Elijah and what were they talking about (v. 3)

Why the tents (v. 4 [feast days in Israel])

"Even though this could be dealt with in passing in the text, it may be helpful to deal with it now. Peter wanted to make three "tabernacles" or "shelters" or "booths." He was thinking of the Feast of Tabernacles. But what prompted him to think of that. The accounts tell us he was afraid, and did not know what he was saying. I take that to mean that his timing was wrong for the suggestion, for this was not the time. **The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated every year by the Jews; it commemorated the wilderness wandering or temporary sojourn of the people until they settled in the land. The people therefore would build the little shelters and live under them for the week, only to come out of them at the end, at the great day of the feast (with much relief we might add). The seven day festival not only commemorated the temporary sojourn of the people in the wilderness, but in this age, for the final great day was a celebration of the settlement in the land, and (in the future) the culmination of the promises.** That is why it came at the end of the calendar year.

Peter had heard Jesus say about a week earlier that some who were standing there would not taste death before they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matt. 16:28). Now, on the mountain, Peter saw Christ in all His glory. His instinct may have been to think that this was it, the start of the kingdom. And so in all his eagerness he wanted to make the shelters for the great celebration. We do not know how well Peter knew the prophetic literature of the Bible, but Zechariah makes it clear that in the kingdom the people will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, i.e., the culmination of all the promises. **Peter had the right idea, in general, but the wrong time, for Christ had to die first.**

It is interesting that Matthew says this took place after six days, and Luke says about the eighth day. Edersheim² wonders if Peter's great confession might not have been made on a Sabbath day, and then after six days, the night of the next sabbath, or the morning of the first day of the week, the eighth day, the Lord appears in His glory. If this is correct, and it is the only meaning for the days that makes sense, then the symbolism of a Sunday transfiguration and a Sunday resurrection is significant."²

"Why, in the first place, would Peter suggest such an idea? Two reasons may have prompted this idea. **The first is that Leviticus 23 called on the people to yearly celebrate the feast of Booths or Tabernacles. This required that everyone build a small booth or tabernacle out of branches and boughs and live in them for seven days as a commemoration of the children of Israel being in the wilderness after they left Egypt.** It was a memorial to God's preserving them through that period of time. The feast of Tabernacles may have been occurring in Jerusalem while they were on the mountain, so Peter's mind may have already been thinking about that. Second, the prophet Zechariah predicted that during the Millennium when "*the Lord will be king*

over all the earth," one of the activities that will take place will be the celebration of the Feast of Booths by all nations.

Peter could have easily merged these ideas together and thought this could be the beginning of what he had been hoping for and the kingdom would soon be ushered in. He could think of nothing better than celebrating the feast of Tabernacles there on that Mountain with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. But Peter was wrong. The kingdom was coming, but not in the way that he was envisioning it. Moses and Elijah left, and Jesus was still going to Jerusalem to die. Peter's suggestion was ignored, but his suggestion does show he believed Jesus to be the Messiah."³

The father interrupts Peter's jabbering (v. 5)

Notice the response by the disciples

Notice the words spoken by the Lord

Notice the aftermath, "They saw no one but Jesus only"

Section 9-13 is built around a simple command, "Tell no one what you have seen until after I am raised from the dead."

"We may divide the passage into three major parts for our analysis. First, we have the record of the event of the transfiguration (verses 1-3). Second, we have Peter's suggestion and the divine response to it (verses 4-8). And third, we have the instruction by Jesus and the question by the disciples (verses 9-13)."⁴

Author's Emphasis:

"The experience on this mountain reflects the experience of Israel on Mount Sinai. There in Exodus (19-24) the glory of the LORD hovered on the top of the mountain as Moses received the Law. And because of the presence of the LORD, Moses face began to reflect the glory of the LORD. But to ensure that this was indeed the Law of God that was to be obeyed, God spoke. The Bible says that the people heard the sound of His voice; they did not see the LORD, but they heard the words (Deut. 4). That vision, and that sound, confirmed to them that the Law was from the LORD God and was to be obeyed."⁵

Author's Strategies:

Here is what Jesus was; here is what He will be; but here is what He now is.

In the incarnation, He took on the form of humanity; He added human nature to what He is as God. In Jesus, we have two natures within one person. The divine nature controls the one person. The purpose of the adding is so that He might taste death for His people and in so doing redeem them from sin's debt and restore them to the Father's joy.

In the transfiguration, He lifts the human veil and allows the three to see Him in His pre-incarnate glory. It is this same glory that He will have after His death, and burial, and resurrection.

Shepherding the Sheep: WHAT'S NEXT?

- First, Jesus is God incarnate. He is the Messiah.
- Second, Jesus will suffer, die, be buried, and on the third day arise from the grave victorious over death and hell.
- Third, there is a Sabbath Rest coming in the program of God. He will set up His kingdom on earth even as it is in heaven.
- Fourth, do not think you can bypass the process. Suffering and death always comes before resurrection and glory.
- Finally, our sole responsibility is to accept who He is and obey what He says. You and I need to stop talking and doing and start listening and seeing. God is speaking through the text, His word, and we need to BELIEVE WHO HE IS AND OBEY WHAT HE SAYS. What this will look like is you and I decreasing and He alone is increasing. The white noise of this shadow gives way to the clarity and glory of the substance. Will we submit ourselves to this?

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-transfiguration-matthew-171-13>

² <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-transfiguration-matthew-171-13>

³ https://gracebibleny.org/glimpse_his_glory_matthew_17113

⁴ <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-transfiguration-matthew-171-13>

⁵ <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-transfiguration-matthew-171-13>