

Bask in the Glory of the Transfiguration; Jesus' Glory & Ours!

Luke 9:28-36 March 3, 2019 Pastor Robert Hein

Dear Fellow Recipients of God's Amazing Grace,

Take a look at the scene of Jesus' Transfiguration up on the screen. How many characters do you see represented in this picture? Well, there are 7 for sure. You have three of Jesus' chosen disciples who were eyewitness of this event; Peter, James and John. Then you have Jesus himself, appearing along with Moses and Elijah in glorious splendor. That makes 6. But if you listen carefully, you will discover one more person is present; God the Father. He is not seen, but he speaks an approving word from heaven, **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!"**

And we can add more character to this glorious scene, and that is the person actually taking the picture, Luke, the evangelist. Luke was not present at the time, but the Holy Spirit verbally inspired him to write down this account in the Bible, so we too could bask in the glory of Jesus' Transfiguration today.

This morning I would like to zoom in on just one person in this picture, and that is Moses, the prophet. Today we are going to view the Transfiguration from his personal perspective.

Moses lived a remarkable life. 1,500 years before Jesus was born, Moses was born as a slave in Egypt. From the very outset, his life was in jeopardy, as Pharaoh had recently issued an order that every Hebrew baby boy be put to death. So his God-fearing parents put him in a basket among the reeds of the Nile River, and sent his sister to keep an eye on him. God spared Moses' life in an unusual way. Pharaoh's own daughter noticed the baby in the basket and raised her as his own son. She even gave him the name "Moses" which literally means, "Drawn out of the water."

Moses lived to be 120 years old, and we can easily divide his life into three sections of 40 years each. 40 years living in Egypt as part of Pharaoh's own household, 40 years living as shepherd in Midian, and 40 years leading the Children of Israel in the wilderness.

It's remarkable to see how the Lord worked his gracious plan through Moses during each stage of his life. Even though Moses grew up among the Egyptians, his own mother cared for him and shared with him the promises of the Savior. Moses did not worship the false gods of the Egyptians or adopt their sinful way of life. Instead he remained faithful to the one true God of Israel.

In fact, the writer to the Hebrews includes Moses as one of the great heroes of faith. He wrote, **“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.”** Hebrews 11:24-27

Isn't that remarkable? 1500 years before Jesus was born, Moses already trusted in him as his Savior. Moses saw him who is invisible. Moses saw Christ, not with his human eyes of course, but with the eyes of faith. Moses was longing for the coming of the Messiah and embraced the gracious blessings he offered him. That's why he chose to identify with the Israelite slaves rather than their Egyptian task masters. He knew who was truly blessed, and who enjoyed a brighter future.

Moses then led the Children of Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus to the Promised Land of Canaan. During this period of his life Moses served as a great prophet. He received God's laws on Mt. Sinai and he revealed God's will to the people. But Moses did not just preach law. He also pointed people to Christ by sharing the Gospel. You want proof? Listen to what Jesus once said to the Jews who rejected him. **“If you listened to Moses, you would listen to me, because Moses wrote about me.”** John 5:46

Moses was one of those Old Testament prophets who just couldn't wait to see promised Savior arrive and fulfill God's plan of salvation. Moses was considered to be the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, but even he recognized that he could only offer previews of a coming attraction, previews of the blessings Christ would bring. Moses

himself pointed to Jesus as the greatest prophet to come when he said, **“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”** Deut. 18:15

How overjoyed Moses must have been then to appear with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. What he had hoped and prayed for all those years was now about to take place. Do you see how Moses connects the dots between prophecy and fulfillment, the Old Testament and the New?

1,500 years earlier Moses commanded the people to listen to the coming Savior, God’s chosen prophet. And now on the Mt. of Transfiguration God the Father points to Jesus and says, “Yes, he’s the one. He’s the one Moses wrote about. He’s the one Elijah was longing for. The hopes and dreams of all the years are met in him – Jesus is the ultimate prophet – Listen to him!

Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about his departure which was about to take place in Jerusalem. Like a little kid excited to open his Christmas presents, Moses must have been very excited to see God’s plan of salvation about to become reality.

And do you know something? Jesus was strengthened by this conversation as well. As true God Jesus needs no strengthening, but as true man he can receive strengthening and encouragement. And he would need it. You see, right after this glorious event, Jesus would begin his lowly walk to the cross. He would walk a very tough road in which Satan and sinful men would throw everything they could at him to make him fail. And so just before his suffering begins in earnest, Jesus assures us that everything that would happen to him, including his arrest, his beatings, his crucifixion and his death would take place according to God’s saving plan.

The last 40 years of Moses’ life were pretty difficult. Just as they were about to enter the Promised Land, the hearts of the people melted with fear and they rebelled against him. As a result, they spent the next 40 years wandering about in the desert. God would still keep his promise to give them the land of Canaan as an inheritance, but not to the

adults, but rather to their children. Everyone over 20 years old perished in the wilderness except those two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

But what about Moses? Did he ever enter the Promised Land? I would answer that question “No” and “Yes” depending upon which Promised Land you are talking about.

Moses never did set foot in the Promised Land of Canaan. Because of an act of disobedience on his part, God told him he would not make it in.

Do you ever feel sorry for Moses? I mean he served the Lord faithfully all those years, and yet, he never entered the Promised Land. To get that close, but not cross over must have been disheartening. Do you think that Moses’ life ended in failure and frustration?

No, not all! You see, I believe that Moses did enter the Promised Land, not physically, but spiritually. First of all, just before he died, God led Moses up to the top of Mt. Nebo and allowed him to view the Promised Land from afar. Even though he never entered it physically, with his God given eyes of faith, he could view it as his own personal possession.

That’s what faith does. Faith can see future blessings as a present reality. It’s also important to remember that Moses was never all that concerned about possessing physical land in a specific geographical location. The Promised Land mattered to him only because it was all tied in with the promises of the Savior. He treasured the Promised Land because the promised Savior would be born in that land, a Savior through whom all nations would be blessed.

By faith Moses saw the coming of the Savior and he embraced his blessings, even from afar. Moses certainly did not die in failure and frustration. It didn’t matter to him that he could not enter the land of Canaan, so long as the door to the true promised land of heaven stood wide open to him. This was his joyful hope in Christ all along. Concerning faithful believers like Moses, the write to the Hebrews tells us, “**13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they**

had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13-16

Yes, Moses; life ended in glorious victory and satisfaction. Once he completed his earthly journey, he entered the true promised land of heaven. His earthly troubles were short and temporary. But the joy and glory that he now enjoys with Jesus in Paradise lasts forever. We see a little glimpse of that victory on the Mt. of Transfiguration as Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus in glorious splendor.

I said there were 7 characters represented in this glorious picture of Jesus' transfiguration, but today, I would like to add an 8th one, and that is you. Yes, you too are privileged to view this spectacular event as revealed to us in the Gospel of Luke.

Pay careful attention to what you see here. We always focus on Jesus' transfiguration just before Lent begins. During this 40 day journey we will see Jesus in the depth of his humiliation and suffering, like one from whom men hide their faces.

So just before it all begins, we need to remember who Jesus truly is. Most of the time Jesus looked just like any other ordinary human being. He didn't glow or have a halo over his head. But on the Mt. of Transfiguration, that all changed. That's what transfigure means, to change completely, to undergo a complete metamorphosis, like a lowly caterpillar transforming into a glorious butterfly. Luke tells us that the appearance of Jesus' face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Matthew tells us that Jesus face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Make no mistake about who Jesus Christ really is. He not merely a good man or a good teacher or a great example. He is the almighty Son of God. He shines forth with the true majesty and splendor of God. In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

But Jesus did not remain on the Mount of Transfiguration in that glorious state. After revealing who he truly was, he then revealed what he truly came to this earth to do. Jesus again became veiled in a lowly state of humiliation to walk to another mountain, Mt. Calvary to suffer and die for our sins.

Both mountains are significant; Mt. Transfiguration and Mt. Calvary. One reminds us that Jesus is true God. That's important because only God could keep God's law perfectly in our place, and only the blood of God's Son could purify us from all sin. And yet, it is just as important to remember that Jesus is also true man. He needed to be fully human to serve as our substitute in life and in death. And so we stand in awe of Jesus' glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration and he stand in awe of amazing love on the mountain we call Calvary.

As you bask in the glory of Jesus' transfiguration, take a close look at Moses and Elijah once again also, appearing with Jesus in glorious splendor. Pay close attention to the glory that surrounds them, because that majestic splendor awaits you one day as well. Yes, their present glory is your future glory.

Remember that when you have to sit at the deathbed of a loved one, watching their strength and vigor slowly fade away. Remember that when you look in the mirror and seek the wrinkles on the rise, the receding hairline, and feel the aches and pains of old age. Remember that when your body seems to be broken and worn out. Many an elderly person has told me it's not easy getting old. And it just doesn't seem all that glorious either.

Without Jesus, the onset of illness and old age can be a terrifying thought. How does that hymn writer put it, "Change and decay all around I see." But with Jesus, we can approach the coming years with hope and confidence. You see, like Moses, we are on a journey to the Promised Land, and it can't be found anywhere here on this earth. No, just like Moses, we are longing for the true Promised Land, our eternal home with Jesus in heaven. Every day we put behind us then is one day closer to achieving that glorious goal. And nothing, not sickness or disease, or old age or failing health, not even death itself can keep us from reaching that goal. That's why we love to bask in the glory of the Transfiguration; Jesus' glory and ours! Amen.