

The Festival of the Transfiguration of our Lord
St. Matthew 17:1-9
January 21st, 2018
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

This Is My Beloved Son

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today our Lord + Jesus Christ fully reveals Himself to the Apostles, Sts. Peter, James and John. It is a fitting end to this season of the Epiphany of our Lord, for we began with our Lord being revealed through the leading of the star to the magi from the east. There the infant Lord + Jesus was adored and worshiped as the God Who became man; Who dwells in our flesh; Who tabernacled Himself in our flesh. He made a dwelling place—a Temple—of our flesh, in order that He might save us from sin, death and the devil. And our Lord + Jesus was continually revealed as the Savior of man throughout this season of Epiphany.

At Cana, He was manifested as the Son of God Who dwells in the flesh among men, by changing water into wine; the profane being changed into the sacred, just like the flesh of mankind that He bears, being changed from unholy to holy through His perfect obedience to the Law, which we saw in the Boy + Jesus before the rulers of the Temple, when He showed His knowledge and wisdom regarding the Law of Moses. All of this revealing has led us to this day, where our Lord fully reveals Himself to Sts. Peter, James and John on the mount of Transfiguration.

But what is the reaction of the Apostles? St. Peter in his fear tells our Lord + Jesus that he would be willing to build three tabernacles: one for our Lord, one for Moses and one for Elijah. You have probably often heard how St. Peter got it wrong because he wanted to build three tabernacles, so that he could stay there on the mountain and enjoy this moment forever. However, that is a wrong summation. The text actually gives the reason, if one is paying attention. Notice that our Lord + Jesus never gets a chance to answer him, for suddenly a cloud overshadows them and a voice from Heaven proclaims the Lord + Jesus to be the very Beloved Son of God. It is to Him we are to listen. Do you see? It is not that St. Peter desired to make tabernacles, but that he desired to make *three* tabernacles.

It is only in the Lord + Jesus Christ where we are to find our true tabernacle; our dwelling place with God. Indeed, the Lord God shows that no tabernacle built by man is even sufficient, for the Lord God forms the very tabernacle necessary by overshadowing everybody with a cloud, just as it was in the days of Moses when the people of Israel were led by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night. This cloud is to be understood as God's presence among His people. It is to be understood as the Lord God overshadowing His people. This cloud is a type of tabernacle; it is a dwelling place of God; it is the Lord God showing that in His Son, the Lord + Jesus, is to be found the only true and

needful tabernacle. For, He is God incarnate; He is the Lord God dwelling among His people. The Lord + Jesus is God dwelling among us. And, He has come to rescue us from sin, death and the devil.

In this we see how fully revealed the Lord + Jesus' divinity and glory is revealed to the Apostles, Sts. Peter, James and John. It's not that they didn't know this before. How many times did the Apostles exclaim, "Who is this, Who does such wonderful things?" But, the Apostles are having a "Moses moment." Just like when Moses appeared before God in front of the burning bush, he could no other thing then bow before the Lord God, for he realized that he was a sinful man of unclear speech. So too when the Apostles realize that they are truly standing in front of the One, True Triune God—these poor, miserable sinners—they have no other option but to fall on their faces in humility and fear, knowing that of themselves they have no worthiness to be in the Lord God's presence.

The same is true of us when we come face to face with our sins and iniquities. We cannot stand in rebellion, but we fall on our knees in humility and fear of our Lord's wrath over our transgressions. This is why Christians have always kneeled for confession in the Divine Service, because it is the proper posture of humility and fear. This also why Christians historically have kneeled during the Words of Institution—the Verba Domini—for we realize that we are in the very presence of our Lord + Jesus Christ; He is present for us in His Body and Blood given and shed for us sinners in bread and wine. Christians have also historically kneeled when they have come to this altar to receive our Lord, we rightly kneel, for us poor, miserable sinners, have come before our Lord + Jesus and we have no right or worthiness in ourselves to stand before our Lord on account of our manifold sins and iniquities.

But our Lord + Jesus does not leave us there on our knees. He enters into our hearts by way of our mouths, and through the work of the Holy Ghost, purifies and cleanses our sin-sick hearts, and renews us with a clean heart and spirit; He creates and sustains in us faith, so that we might rejoice in the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation.

This is the same thing that our Lord + Jesus does to the Apostles on the mount of Transfiguration. Having heard the voice from the cloud and having fallen on their faces in fear and humility, what does our Lord + Jesus do? He touches them and tells them to have no fear, for He is their hope and salvation. It is through Him—through His tabernacling with us—that they have hope of rescue from sin. His perfect obedience to the Law and His suffering and death for them is their hope and reason to not fear. It is the same hope we have.

This is why the pastor says, after you have received the Lord + Jesus upon your tongue and in your heart, and thereby received forgiveness, the pastor says the words that confirm that forgiveness: "Depart in peace." And what do we do when we hear those words? We do just like the Apostles did, we rise and stand before our Lord, and rejoice in our forgiveness and respond with the word, "Amen," our acknowledgement that we indeed have received forgiveness for our sins. For, like the Apostles, we rise and see only our Lord + Jesus as our One, True and only Savior. For He is the One and Only necessary dwelling place of God—the only tabernacle—that we need in this life of sin and death.

Therefore, my dear friends rejoice and sing "Alleluia." Sing that great Alleluiatic hymn all this week, for in a few days, we will turn our eyes away from the mountain of Transfiguration, and be confronted with our own sin and iniquity until we reach that great day; that "good" day upon which our Lord + Jesus offered up the tabernacle of His Body for our salvation. For on account of that sacrifice, and on account of our sins that led to that sacrifice, we cannot do anything but fall on our knees in fear and humility, but because that sacrifice means our forgiveness, life and salvation, we cannot do anything but sing, "Alleluia." Praise be to the Lord, Who is creator of Heaven and Earth, choose to come and dwell with us in our flesh to redeem us from the power of sin, death and the devil. Alleluia indeed! Our Lord + Jesus Christ has come to save us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.