



JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

Part 39 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 9:28-36 | August 01, 2010

Luke 9:28–36

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

THE GLORY OF GOD

Howdy, Mars Hill. Today we are in Luke 9:28–36, looking at Jesus' transfiguration, and herein we see Jesus in glory. The glory of God is one of the great mega-themes of the Bible. Depending upon how you count it, the glory of God is referenced some three hundred times in the totality of Scripture in various ways. And when we're speaking of the glory of God, we're speaking of an attribute of God, an aspect of who God is.

And to be honest with you, explaining the glory of God causes us to strain because of the limitations of human language. When the Bible says that we see in part, and we know in part in this life, and one day we shall see him face-to-face, and we will know him as he is known, it is indicating for us that when it comes to things such as the glory of God, there is an aspect in which we know truly, because of Scripture, but not fully until we see the glorious face of Jesus on the other side of death.

Nonetheless, as an attribute of God, the glory of God speaks of the splendor, beauty, magnificence, radiance, heaviness, weightiness, prominence, preeminence, luminescence, splendor, majesty, holiness, purity, worthiness, and superiority of the God of the Bible.

FIRE AND CLOUDS

And occasionally in Scripture, the glory of God is revealed to the people of God. God, oftentimes, shows up in glory in such ways as fire and clouds, that as you see fire and clouds in Scripture—leading God's people in Exodus, surrounding God as he's unveiled in places like Isaiah and Revelation, so that human beings get to peer behind the curtain, as it were, and see God in his glory. As you see Scripture in places like Daniel speaking of Jesus coming for a second time, a day that we long for, on the clouds of glory, these are ways in which the Bible is indicating to us that the glory of God is being revealed to the people of God. And so things like fire and clouds are indicative of that.

The ancient rabbis used to use language to explain the glory of God when it was made known to the people of God, and they would use the word "Shekinah glory." It's not a language that the Bible uses. That word "Shekinah" is not found in Scripture, but it was their way articulating and explaining the revelation of God's glory, the demonstration of God's glory, that God is glorious, and for us, Shekinah glory means that we have beheld God in glory, that he has made himself known and visible to us gloriously. And in those moments, it is a cloud enveloping God's people, or a fire leading God's people, and illuminating that which is darkness around them. That is because the glory of God encircles the people of God. The glory of God reveals the people of God. The glory of God leads the people of God.

The glory of God, in this way, is first spoken of back in Exodus. In chapter 13, verse 21, we read that God shows up in glory among his people, who are in exile, and they're wandering in wilderness. And there is a cloud that leads them by the day; that is the cloud of the glory of God. And there is a pillar of fire that leads them by night; that is the fire of the glory of God. And from that occasion onward, the book of Exodus is filled with occasions where God shows up in glory in pillar and fire.

As well, we know from Exodus 33 and 34 that Moses was able to enjoy the presence of the glory of God. He saw the God of glory and the glory of God as he was serving as a type of Jesus Christ, mediating between the holy God of glory, and the unholy people of God. And as he would enjoy the presence of God in his glory, he also would be reminded of the sinfulness, and stubbornness, and rebelliousness, and idolatry of God's people. And so God's glory would envelop him, and God's glory would comfort and strengthen him.

We know as well, in Exodus 33–34, that Moses, upon receiving his second copy of the Ten Commandments (in anger, he broke the first) he came down from the mount, and after meeting with God, receiving the Ten Commandments, and we read in Exodus 34 that his face, after spending time in the presence of the glory of God, simply radiated the glory of God; that God was so gloriously meeting with Moses that upon coming down from his lengthy meeting with God to preach to the people and present to them the Ten Commandments, his face radiated the glory of God from simply being in the presence of God.

To give you some illustration, perhaps, of this, last night as I was up quite late preparing this sermon outside on my Mac. We have a fire in the back of the house off the deck, and I was sitting there by the fire in complete darkness. And what I was enjoying was the presence of the glory of the fire, that in the midst of darkness, to use the language that Scripture does, that the fire was glorious. It was radiating. It was illuminating. It was compelling. It was warming. It was revealing.

And my son, Gideon, who is four, came up to me and asked, “Poppa Daddy, can I put a stick in the fire?” He first asked if he could roast marshmallows. Grace found, I think, the world’s largest marshmallows. They’re about the same size as my head, and the kids like to roast them in our fire and eat them, but they’ll all be diabetic if we let them do that every night. So I told Gideon, “No.” It was almost bedtime.

And he said, “Well, Dad, can I just go find a stick in the yard and burn it in the fire?” He’s four, and burning a stick in the fire is a momentous event for him. So he found a long, lengthy stick to ensure his safety, and he stood back, and he was just mesmerized in the presence of the fire, and its radiating glory. And he took a stick, and he placed it in the fire, and he waited for it to start burning.

And what he loved to do was take the stick out of the fire, blow the flame off the end of the stick, and then just watch it radiate the glory of the fire, and the end of the stick would become red and turn more into a coal, and it would burn, and it would radiate the glory of the fire. And Gideon kept looking at it in the darkness, and holding it up, and he was absolutely mesmerized by the ability of an otherwise dead and lifeless stick to radiate the glory of something else, the fire.

And Moses was like that. He was a man who went up to the presence of God, and after being in the presence of God, like a stick on a campfire, he came down radiating the glory of God. And that is ultimately what we are to be as God’s image bearers, radiators of the glory of God. Apart from God, dead in our trespasses and sins, but through faith in God made alive, and placed into the presence of God positionally in Christ, so that the glory of God would radiate in us, and that people would see the love of God in the eyes of his people, and they would see the holiness and goodness of God in the lives of God’s people who are radiating forth the glory of God.

THE TEMPLE

Well, as we trace this theme of glory briefly through the Bible, we know that glory existed as well in the worship of God surrounding the tabernacle, as God’s people were in exile, and on journey going from their place of slavery in Egypt to their ultimate home in Israel, God instructed them, in great detail, to build something called the tabernacle. And this was a portable worship center, a portable church, if you will. It was a tent, for all intents and purposes, and God would fill the tabernacle, and people would worship God as he came to dwell among them, Exodus 40 tells us, in glory. And so the glory of God is inextricably connected to the worship of God.

We don’t make God glorious, God is glorious. God possesses this perfect attribute of glory, and he reveals it to us. He comes to be with us, and we worship the God of glory because he, alone, is worthy. This leads to the temple glory, where after ultimately entering into, many years later, their promised land of Israel, the instructions for the construction of the temple were given to David. Because he was a sinner and a murderer, he was not allowed, as king, to build the temple, and so that duty was granted to his son, Solomon.

And Solomon oversaw, as king, the construction of the temple, which was to be the house for God on the earth. That sacred meeting place between the God of heaven and the people of God on the earth, and it was where God would come to be with his people, and God’s people would come to meet with their God, and so it became that connecting point between heaven and earth. And God was to be worshiped there, and so God showed up in glory.

You can read it for yourself, and discuss it in your community group, but in 2 Chronicles 7 it explains that the temple was completed regarding construction, and that fire came down from God. God revealing himself again in glory through fire, consuming a sacrifice, showing that sin must be atoned for and dealt with. And then the glory of God filled the temple, and the God of glory came to be among his people, just like Jesus, later, would come down to be with us.

That’s where John in his gospel shows us that he came from the Father, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, that Jesus is the glorious God, and the glory of God, and the God of glory, come down to be with us. Just like the temple housed the glory of God, so Jesus’ body was the ultimate fulfillment of the temple, and it was Jesus who brought to us the fullness of the glory of God, housed in his body as the glory of God was previously housed upon the completion of the construction of the temple of Solomon. All that we see in the Old Testament is all foreshadowing the coming of Jesus, who is the fulfillment.

ICHABOD

There is then a series of tragic events, and a horrendous occasion in the history of Israel, and it is recorded in Ezekiel 10 and 11, and 1 Samuel 4, and that is that God’s people did not worship God alone, the Creator, they started worshiping created things. They began participating in paganism, animism. They began worshiping everyone and everything except for God. They were guilty of repeated idolatry, and as a result, the temple was defaced and defiled.

And people would have said they believed in God, perhaps like some of you, but their lives were lived in rebellion and unholiness, and so something occurred that was absolutely tragic. The glory of God departed from the temple of God and the people of God. God left. God's presence was removed. God's glory was withdrawn.

Like some of you, people just assumed that God would always be with them, that God would always endure with them, that God would always put up with them, and eventually God's patience came to the end of its tether. And knowing their hardness of heart, and stiffness of neck, and rebelliousness of life, God withdrew his glory, and a name was given, Ichabod, which means the glory of God has departed.

Ichabod was that season of the history of Israel wherein from that moment forward for six hundred years, six hundred years, the glory of God was absent. God did not reveal himself in glory. There was not a cloud of God's glory. There was not a flame of God's glory. There was not a tabernacle or temple that housed God's glory. God removed himself, regarding his presence, from his people. And for six hundred years it is a season of Ichabod. It is a season of the absence of the glory of God.

A BABY

And to pick up the story of the theme of Scripture regarding glory in Luke's gospel, we then read this some months ago as we examined Luke 2:8-14, "And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field—" a normal day for working-class peasants, "Keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them—" Something is going to happen, and what? What does it say, Mars Hill?

"And the glory," there it is. It has been a six-hundred-year season of Ichabod. The glory of the Lord has departed. And to shepherds, blue-collar peasant workers in the field who were keeping watch of flock at night, an angel shows up, "And the glory of the Lord shone around them." The glory of the Lord is returning to the people of the Lord.

"And they were filled with fear." "What could this mean? Is this the presence of God for the judgment of sin? Will we live? Will we die? Will we be blessed? Will we be cursed? What does this mean? The glory of God has been absent for six hundred years. What is he doing here now?"

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'" All the races, all the nations, all the classes, all the socioeconomic backgrounds, and income levels, and IQs, and it is for all the people. "'For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ—" the anointed one of God, "'the Lord.'" Caesar is not Lord. Jesus is Lord.

"'And this will be a sign for you.'" How will we know what is happening about the birth of this glorious Lord? He tells us: "'You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.'" The glory of God is coming in the form of a child. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host—" This is a lot of angels— "praising God and saying," —what do they say, Mars Hill? Glory, glory. "'Glory to God.'" Why? Because God is glorious. We don't make God glorious, we acknowledge the glory of God. We celebrate the glory of God. We respond to the glory of God. God is glorious.

He reveals his glory, and we respond to him as the angels did, worshipping him, saying, "'Glory to God in the highest.'" That means he is highest. He's above all nations, and he's above angels and demons. He's above Satan and sinners. He's above all languages, and cultures, and political parties, and leaders, and warriors, and soldiers, and thinkers, and movement leaders. Whomever you admire, whomever you esteem, whoever you aspire to be like, God is the highest. His name is Jesus, and he, alone, is worthy of glory.

"'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" And the announcement is given. The glory of God is returning to the people of God in the person of Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the God of glory, that Jesus is the highest Lord, that Jesus is not only the God of glory, he is the God who comes to reveal glory.

ON THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY

And then something happens in Luke 9:28. Jesus has, at this point in the story, grown from boyhood to manhood. He's now in his early thirties. He's been doing ministry publicly. He's been preaching, and teaching, and healing, and raising the dead, and casting out demons, and caring for the multitudes, and he's chosen twelve disciples to be his students.

And something happens in Luke 9:28, "Now about eight days after these sayings," in previous ministry, "Jesus took with him Peter and John and James," his three senior leaders. The Bible speaks of 120 and 70, and it talks as well of the 12 who were disciples and among them, the three who were the senior leaders. There is a chain of command. There is a hierarchy of leadership, and there are always smaller teams within larger teams based upon the example of Jesus.

And they get privileged access to Jesus. They get to be there for sacred moments that others do not have the opportunity to enjoy. "And he went with them on the mountain to pray." So they go up to a high place. It may have been, to be honest with you, to escape the crowds. Jesus had multitudes following him, pressing in around him continually.

And Luke is clear to tell us in places like, chapter 5, verse 16, that Jesus would often withdraw to lonely places and pray. That's exactly what Luke 5:16 says, that Jesus would pour himself out in ministry, and then he would pull himself out of ministry, and he would place himself in the presence of the Father to be refreshed and encouraged.

I had my performance review recently by the elders here at the church, and they said I need to do more of this, and I agree with them. Jesus made it a

habit to withdraw to lonely places to pray, to be refreshed, and encouraged by the Father. You need that, I need that, so that then we can be filled with the Spirit of God and the love of God, and participate in the lives of others to the glory of God.

And that's exactly what Jesus here is doing, silence and solitude for prayer and time with the Father. And these mark important moments in Jesus' ministry. Give you another example, where before he selected his twelve disciples, he spent a whole night in prayer, discussing with the Father whom was to be chosen.

You and I need to enjoy the Scriptures, and follow the example of Jesus. And our major seasons of life and ministry need to be bathed in prayer, and sustained in prayer. Before you determine what college you will go to, or what major you will declare, or what person you will marry, or what theology you will build your life upon, before you determine where you will live, or what church you will become a member of, or what community group you will join, or what ministry you will volunteer for, what people you will call friends, or what friends you will confide certain grievous, or painful parts of your life to, before you decide whether or not you will buy that home, or spend that money, before you determine how you will allocate your resources, how you will tithe generously, financially to God and his people, before we make these big life decisions that are enormous, and affect so many people, including yourself, it's important to get away and spend some time in prayer. That's what Jesus is doing here.

THE GLORY OF GOD IS UNVEILED

Verse 29, "And while he was praying," while Jesus is enjoying communion and union with the Father as he had from eternity passed, "the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white." Again, it has been six hundred years since the glory of the Lord has been revealed to the people of the Lord. And here it is this humble, Galilean, peasant carpenter born of a teenage girl in a town of dozens, in the middle of relative obscurity that the glory of God explodes, is unveiled, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, in the moment of his prayer.

Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." And here the light of the glory of God is manifest, revealed, unveiled through this God-man, Jesus Christ. And this is how Jesus existed in eternity past. When you think of Jesus, be careful not to think of him just during what I will call his humble incarnation.

All of this is in the *Doctrine* book, and I know it can be complicated, but I'll try and summarize and synthesize this very important series of truths for you. Jesus is eternal God. He lives without beginning or end as the Creator God in perfect communion with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, that they live together as one God, three persons in glory, glorying in one another, glorifying one another, worshiping, enjoying in communion and community, one another in eternity past. And this is the God of the Bible, the God of glory.

And then God creates the heavens and the earth, he creates us in his image and likeness, male and female. He creates us to radiate his glory, and we sin, and we fall, we rebel, we become depraved. We want glory for ourselves, not glory for God. And God makes a promise that he would come as a Savior to love us, and to forgive us, and to redeem us.

And he rises up a succession of prophets in the Old Testament, and he places his words in their mouth, and his Spirit in their heart. And he calls them forth to be the spokesmen for the coming of the God of glory. They're heralds. They give sneak previews, and they give commercials, as it were, in that day. "Here's who God is. Here's what he says, and here's how he's coming."

One of the great prophets of the Old Testament is a man named Isaiah, and he had one of the lengthiest prophetic ministries preaching repentance to God's people of all of the Old Testament prophets. And Isaiah is commissioned into ministry, and it is recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, and Isaiah says this, as he's living his life, the curtain between the world that God dwells in, and the world that God rules over is lifted for a moment.

And Isaiah tells us, "I saw the Lord," and he sees the Lord in glory. "I saw the Lord high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple." We're talking about magnificent glory, God in glory. And he says, around him there were angels, and they were crying out, and they were singing, and they were worshiping, and glorifying him saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; heaven and earth are filled with his glory." Who did Isaiah see in glory? He saw the Lord. He saw God.

Some years later, John would write in the gospel bearing his name in chapter 12, verse 41, "Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him." The God of glory that was beheld by Isaiah was Jesus Christ ruling and reigning before his humble incarnation, before he took on human flesh, before that God got off of his glorious throne, and took upon himself human flesh, and entered into human history as the baby, Jesus Christ, that was announced by the angels that the God of glory had come to be among the people of God.

So before Jesus comes in humility, he previously, eternally rules in glory. Philippians 2 talks about this in verses 5–11 where he humbled himself, he set aside his rights to be worshiped and obeyed in his revelation of glory. He humbled himself. He didn't any way lose his divinity, but he added to it humanity, the church father Augustine rightly tells us. And he took upon himself certain limitations to identify with us fallen sinners that he might be our mediator, that he might be fully God and fully man, and that he might reconcile men and women back to God. But when you think of Jesus, think of him in eternity past, as Isaiah saw him, in glory, and then he comes in humility.

And in this moment, the Mount of Transfiguration, the glory of Jesus Christ, our eternal Creator God is made manifest, it is made visible. The glory of God that is present in Jesus Christ, the God-man is seen. It breaks forth. This is a foreshadowing, a foretaste of Jesus' ultimate return to glory. After his humility, after his suffering, after his abandonment, after his betrayal, after his crucifixion in our place, for our sins, as our substitute Savior, after his burial, there was going to be, and ultimately there in fact was, a glorious resurrection, and then Jesus ascended, where? Back into glory.

And today Jesus rules and reigns in glory, surrounded by angels and the souls of departed believers, being worshiped, and adored, and enjoyed as the

God of glory. So when you think of Jesus, realize that he existed in eternity past in glory, that he exists in eternity future in glory, and during his ministry on the earth to identify with us, he came humbly. But in this moment of Luke 9, his glory breaks forth, his glory is made known. And the next time you and I see Jesus, it will be in glory.

In fact, in the new creation on the other side of resurrection, the Bible promises that the glory of Jesus will be made known to all of creation continually. Revelation 21:23 says it this way: "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb." That the centerpiece of the new creation will be the throne of God, and seated upon it will be Jesus Christ in glory, with his glory radiating outward, illuminating all of the new creation.

There will be no sun, and there will be no darkness, because Jesus' glory will radiate forever, and the people of God will be in the presence of God to enjoy, and worship, and celebrate, and like the face of Moses in the presence of the glory of God, radiate forth the glory of God in holiness, and obedience, and worship, which will be the happiest that you have ever been forever because that is who you were made to be, and that is what you were created to do.

MOSES AND ELIJAH, THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Luke 9:30 continues, "Look, two men—" Moses and Elijah—"were talking to him," Jesus. Moses and Elijah show up out of nowhere. I don't even know how we know it was Moses and Elijah. I don't know if they had nametags, T-shirts with their faces on them, I don't know, they just show up. These guys have been gone for a long time.

"They appeared in," what? "Glory," revealing, indicating that you and I on the other side of death, we will be glorified, the presence, and the power of sin will be removed out of the life of the children of God whose faith is in Jesus, and you and I will be in a state of glory. "They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure." They were speaking of Jesus' own exodus, that he would live, that he would die, that he would rise, that he would ascend back to the Father, that he would be completing his mission and he would be departing this earth, and he would be returning to glory, "which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem," that Jesus is finishing his ministry in the region of Galilee.

And chapter 9, verse 51, which is forthcoming in this chapter, says that he set his face toward Jerusalem, and then he begins his journey into Jerusalem where he would be betrayed, and he would be executed, and he would atone for the sin of the world, and that he would rise to conquer Satan, sin, and death.

Now, Moses lived fourteen hundred years prior. Elijah lived nine hundred years prior. Moses penned the majority of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, which means, "book in five parts": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. There is a bit in there that I believe was probably penned by Joshua, his successor, because it's about the death of Moses, and I don't think he wrote that. And he is the one who gives us the law. The Ten Commandments are given to him, and he gives us more than six hundred laws in the Pentateuch, and he represents the law.

Elijah represents the prophets. He is one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. And so herein we have the law and the prophets. And the law and the prophets, friends, are about Jesus. Everything in the Bible is about Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, he said, "Do not think I came to abolish the law and the prophets, rather, I have come to fulfill them."

In a few Bible studies at the end of Luke's gospel, after his resurrection, we are told that Jesus led this Bible study teaching them how everything in the law and the prophets was ultimately fulfilled in him. The priesthood was about Jesus. The temple was about Jesus, because the priest is the mediator and now Jesus is our mediator, and the temple was about the presence of God, and Jesus is the presence of God. And the sacrificial system was about Jesus because Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is our Passover lamb who has been slain.

All of the law and the prophets are about Jesus. The law shows us how sinful we are, and Jesus comes without sin to live the life we have not lived, so that as the prophets command us, we can repent of sin, trust in him, and receive his righteousness as a gift because he, alone, perfectly, obediently fulfills the law of God.

The law and the prophets are all about Jesus, and here in this glorious moment, the law and the prophets come to be with Jesus, in the person of Moses and the prophet Elijah. Both of these men had previously met with God on mountaintops as Jesus was. Moses met with God on Mount Sinai in Exodus 31:18, and Elijah met with God on Mount Horeb, another name for Sinai in 1 Kings 19.

What's interesting as well, Moses died and was buried by God, and Elijah is one of the only two men in the Bible who did not taste death. Enoch and Elijah are the two men that the Bible says did not die, they were, rather, just taken into heaven to be with God. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a flaming chariot. He did not die, he was just taken into the presence of God after faithful service to God, 2 Kings 2 tells us.

A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE

Verse 32, chapter 9, "Now Peter and his companions," the other disciples, "were weighed down with sleep." They're exhausted. And we may read this and sort of mock them, but I can tell you, journeying up these mountains, and climbing up to that point of six thousand feet in 100-degree heat with massive humidity, it's exhausting. Jesus and his disciples have been walking all over the region of Galilee, mountainous, desert-like terrain, and these men are exhausted. It says if Jesus, as the power of the Holy Spirit is enabling his life, he has more energy than the average man. He has more capacity than the average man, and God grants that to some leaders, particularly in certain seasons.

So the other men are tired, "but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him,

Peter said to Jesus,” and we love Peter because Peter always gets it wrong, that’s Peter. If you’re the person who always says the wrong thing at the wrong time, you are Peter’s disciple. If when it would be a perfect moment for silence, you feel free to fill it with your own voice, you’re just like Peter.

Some of us just have this innate ability to always say the wrong thing. I love Peter because it gets better as he gets older, and that’s my hope. I’ve said a lot of things I regret. I can even see them coming out of my mouth. It’s like, “Oh, this is going to be very bad.”

Here’s what Peter says, “‘Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah,’ not knowing what he said.” Peter says, “This would be a very nice community group. I really like John, and I really like James, these are friends of mine, and we wanted to officially start a community group, and we’re trying to pray through who we could invite to our community group. And Jesus, we all voted, we’d love to have you in our community group. And hey, Moses and Elijah, this seems like a really good community group. And the problem with this community group is if we come down the mountain, other people are going want to join our community group, especially as we study the Pentateuch and Elijah because, well, their authors are here. And so how about if we do this, Jesus, how about if we go online, and we go to REI.com, and we just order some tents, and we have them shipped up here to the top of the mountain, and then we just camp together forever? And our community group can just hang out on the mountain, and we don’t need flashlights or a fire. You can just do the glory thing, and Moses and Elijah could answer all of our theological questions, and this would be a pretty fantastic community group. And yeah, there’s no food, but I remember Elijah had food brought to him by some birds. Let’s hook that up.” That’s Peter’s plan.

What he may be referring to is the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was an annual event in Israel’s calendar where, kind of like Thanksgiving in the U.S., or certain other holidays in other nations, everyone would take the week or few days off and maybe get together with their family and friends, and they would feast and fellowship.

And it was decreed according to Scripture that they would live in tents. They would go camping. So if you’re a camper, you go, “Yes, it’s biblical. Camping is holy. God commands camping for his people in the old covenant.” And they would get together and camp, and they would live in tents, and if you’re the kind of person that when the weather permits it in Seattle, both of those days every year, you like to go camping, this is the kind of holiday you would have really enjoyed.

Peter is saying, “Let’s just do the Feast of Tabernacles. Let’s just make some tents, and hang out, and be together.” But the problem is, and this is a common sin among God’s people, he’s trying to indefinitely sustain a mountaintop experience.

People have the proclivity to do this. You have an amazing experience with God, and rather than enjoying it, and moving on to what God would have for you next, you keep trying to go back and relive it. Some of you had a great experience at a camp, and so for you, you’re addicted to camp high. Some of you had a church that did things in a certain way, and maybe that was even your first experience of worship, or teaching, or community, or programming, and it meant a lot to you, and God used it in your life. And I don’t want to denigrate that at all. We rejoice in that, but you keep trying to recreate it and relive it. “If we could just go back and keep it the way that it was.”

Parents even have a proclivity to do this with children. “We had an amazing experience when they were this age, and I just want to keep them that size, and keep them that age, and keep reliving those experiences. I just want to capture this sacred moment, and never let it dissipate.”

And the truth is, it is a sin to want to continually relive mountaintop experiences. We are to enjoy those sacred moments that God shows up in glory in our life, and then proceed forward trusting that, if and when it’s time, he will meet with us at a different time, perhaps even in a different way.

For some of you, this comes down to music. And you say, “But I worship God through this music.” You may worship worship. It may have been a moment where even in singing a song or hearing a song, the glory of God was revealed to you, meaning that your heart and mind were open to love Jesus, but now you have to sing that song, or you have to sing those songs, or you have to sing them in those ways. And methodologies then become methodolatries because we keep trying to recreate, relive a mountaintop experience, some sort of Christian high. And Peter has that same sin.

“LISTEN TO HIM”

Verse 34, “While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them.” Again, I told you early on that often in the Bible, clouds and fire are indicative of God revealing himself in glory. “A cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.” The glory of God is surrounding them. “Then from the cloud came a voice that said—” so the Holy Spirit is indwelling and empowering Jesus. We’ve already read previously in Luke that he is filled with the Holy Spirit, that is the third member of the Trinity. Here is Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. And now we will hear from God the Father, the first member of the Trinity. He’s going to speak.

He says, “This is my Son.” Like father, like son. “He’s the same as me. We are equal.” This is a declaration of divinity. This is God the Father saying, “That man is the God-man.” “My Chosen,” “he’s the one who I have chosen to reveal my glory to and through. He is the one who I have chosen to save sinners by.”

“Listen to him.” Mars Hill, you should highlight that in your Bible. Listen to him. Don’t listen to Satan. Don’t listen to false teachers. Don’t listen to those who would confuse you with false religions and ideologies, and half-truths, and don’t listen to all your critics, and don’t listen to the world. Listen to him. Listen to him, the Lord Jesus.

“When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.” Moses and Elijah are gone. Their work is done. Jesus remains because he still has to atone for the sin of the world. “And they kept silent in those days, and they told no one anything of what they had seen.”

Friends, Jesus is not just another man. Jesus is not just another good man. Jesus is not even, as the Muslims would falsely tell you, just another prophet. Moses and Elijah, actually both of whom were prophets, were there, and Jesus is in a completely different category. He's not just a mere prophet. He's not just a mere man. He's not just a mere teacher. He is the glory of God.

As Paul says elsewhere, he is the image of the invisible God. The invisible God, the Creator God is made known, is seen. His glory is revealed in the person, and the work, and the teaching of Jesus Christ, the God-man. Jesus is the God of glory revealed humbly, and then made known in glory. That's exactly what's happening here.

And here the Father is echoing his baptism where, again, Jesus was coming out of the water. The Holy Spirit was present in the form of a dove. The whole Trinity is there, and we read previously in Luke 4 that the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." That's what God the Father says about Jesus.

It doesn't matter what anyone else says about Jesus. What does God the Father say about Jesus Christ, the Son of God? He says, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased," at the baptism. He says, "This is my Son, My Chosen. Listen to him," on the Mount of Transfiguration. There can be no higher authority than the Creator God. There can be no higher authority than God the Father. There can be no more authoritative testimony of who Jesus is than God the Father. It doesn't matter what the leaders say, what religious people say, what books are written, how people speculate, what the polls would indicate. God the Father says Jesus is God become man, and he, alone, possesses the glory of God because he is the God of glory.

SOMETHING MORE SURE

Now, some of you in hearing this say, "This is astonishing." It is. It's absolutely astonishing. See, here Jesus is revealed as the God of the Bible, but it's nothing he's done. He doesn't make himself radiate glory. That's done as a gift in a revelation from the Father, and Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, but it's not something that he says. It's what the Father says so that the deity, the divinity of Jesus Christ is made seen, known through God the Father. There can be no higher authority. There can be no more authoritative witnesses.

And some of you in hearing this would say, "I wish I would have been there. I wish God would do that for me. I wish I had that kind of certainty and clarity." But we do have the testimony of Peter, some years later. So in 2 Peter 1:16-18 some years later, Peter, who was there on the Mount of Transfiguration, says this: "For we do did not follow cleverly devised myths." God is telling us here, people didn't make this up like other religions.

"When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Peter says, "I saw him in glory. My report is accurate." "For when he received honor and—" what? What's the word, Mars Hill? "Glory from God the Father." The glory was the radiating of Jesus, and the honor was the declaration: "This is my Son, listen to him."

"And the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory." The Father in glory said something. What did he say? "'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" He's going here back to the baptism, and also forward to the transfiguration. On both occasions, the Father says, "This Jesus is my Son."

He goes on to say, "We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven for we were with him," where? "On the holy mountain." On the holy mountain, the mountain that was made holy because Jesus was on it. Peter says, "We were there. If you wonder who Jesus is, trust us. He's the God of glory." And some of you, again, would say, "I wish I had that experience. I wish I had been there on the Mount of Transfiguration. I wish I could have shaken hands with Moses and Elijah, and asked my theological questions, and watched Jesus radiate in glory, and hear God the Father speak, then I would trust in Christ, then my doubts would go away, then my fears would fade."

Read, read with me what Peter, who was there and had that experience has to say. He says in the very next section of verses, 2 Peter 1:19-21, "And we have something more sure." More sure than what? More sure than Jesus radiating the glory of God, more sure than Moses and Elijah returning after having died, more sure than God the Father speaking from heaven. We have something more sure than that. What is it? What is this sure thing that we have?

"The prophetic word," the Scriptures, the Bible. The very words of God are more sure than seeing Jesus in glory, meeting Moses and Elijah, and hearing the voice of the Father. Read your Bible, Mars Hill. Read your Bible. "The prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place—" See this book is filled with glory. The world is filled with darkness, and this book is filled with glory.

"Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts," until Jesus returns, and until Jesus' glory is seen over all of the new creation. "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture—" Nothing that was written by Moses, or Elijah, or Peter, or John "comes from someone's own interpretation." Peter says, "We don't make this up." Peter is ultimately going to be crucified upside down for not renouncing Jesus as Lord.

"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." And the Holy Spirit gives us the Word of God, which is more sure, more sure than seeing Jesus in glory, than meeting Moses and Elijah, than hearing the Father speak, and the Holy Spirit inspires the writing of Scripture about Jesus. He indwells the children of God. He illuminates our understanding so that the God of glory would be gloriously revealed to us, that he would do a transforming work in us, and that his glory would be made manifest through us, and that our lives would radiate forth the glory of God, and love, and justice, and mercy, and compassion, and generosity, and living in all ways for all things to the glory of God alone because God, alone, is glorious. Amen?

Father, you are a glorious God. Lord Jesus, you are a glorious God. Holy Spirit, you are a glorious God. We confess that the Trinitarian, singular God of the Bible is a glorious God enjoying glory in eternity past, coming into human history through the presence, and the person, and the power of Jesus

who is glorious, revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the pages of the Scriptures which are glorious, a sure word. Father, please, please allow us to always remember that you, alone, are glorious, and that you are worthy of all glory. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.
