

Sermon Matthew 17 1 9 Transfiguration

Sermon: Transfiguration Sunday

Text: Matthew 17: 1-9

Theme: “It is good to be here!”

Goal: To highlight how good it is to be in the presence of Jesus – in good and in bad times!

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Peter became excited when He saw Jesus in His glory, talking with Moses and Elijah. Finally he could see the so much desired Kingdom of God! It was as if they had been in heaven! No more troubles, no more pain... only glory! “It is good for us to be here!” And he wanted to perpetuate that experience and that moment.

Obviously it is good to be with Jesus in His glory. And this is our hope. But while we are in this side of heaven, our lives are full of ups-and-downs. *“Peter's suggestion to erect three tabernacles indicates a desire for a permanency of glory apart from the suffering of the cross”*(S.A p. 71) We need to enjoy the peaceful time we spend close to Jesus when He equips us with His strength to face the hard times, when we come down from the mountain and walk in this world.

I – It is good for us to be with Jesus.

We have the opportunity to be close to Jesus when we open the Bible at home, at the Bible Study and at the Service. With our family and with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we feel ourselves comfortable in the presence of Jesus. God Himself is talking to us - When we come to the Lord's Supper and taste the heavenly food, *“this is a foretaste of all that is to come”*. - We would like to extend these moments of heavenly peace.

But then it is time to go back to work, to face the daily challenges. The

disciples, when they came down from the Transfiguration Mountain, they found a demon possessed boy crying and a crowd of people gathered around him. It was like a huge jump from heaven to hell! And they were chocked! - But Jesus was still with them, in moments of glory and in moments of distress. “Listen to Him”, says God in this Gospel.

II – It is good for us to be with Jesus + Moses

Moses came down from heaven to talk with Jesus on the Transfiguration Mountain. Moses is the representative of the Law. God gave the 10 Commandments through him.

When we read the 10 Commandments, we agree that God is right and just. The Commandments are good and wise. We decide, like the Israelite decided when God gave them the 10 Commandments: “Everything the Lord has said we will do; we will obey.” (Ex 24:3,7).

It is good to be with Moses and Jesus on the top of the mountain.

But at the same time the devil throws us down to the dust of disobedience and sin. We realize that we are not able to obey the Commandments 100%. And it is not good anymore to be with Moses when the Law accuses us and condemns us.

Moses is not alone. We are not alone with the Law. Jesus is with us as well. And the Father says: “Listen to Him.” Jesus says: “I accomplished the Law on your behalf. I paid the debt of your sins on the cross. I am now resurrected and in glory for ever, preparing a place for you. Believe in me.”- Then, it is good again for us to be with Jesus and with Moses, forgiven and with a new life every day!

III – It is good for us to be with Jesus + Elijah.

Elijah appeared with Jesus and Moses to the disciples on the Mountain. Elijah is the representative of all the prophets, with their message of hope about the Messiah. Now the Messiah was there and Elijah came from

heaven to talk with Jesus about His departure.

It is always good to be with Elijah and the prophets. Their message of warning and of hope addressed to the Old Testament church is still valid to the New Testament Church. The New Testament had not even been written when the apostles began to preach after Pentecost; and the Old Testament was the Bible that they had to preach. It is good for us to read the Old Testament and see how gracious God always was with His people in spite of the many sins they had committed. The human characters change but the relationship between God and humankind remains the same. The story repeats itself.

In a time that so many other “prophets” are whispering to our ears, it is good for us to go back to the Bible and read it again and again, the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. When God says “Listen to Him”, He is referring to Jesus' as the biggest prophet's words; but we can extend these words to all the Bible. Luther's explanation of the third commandments says: “*We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.*”

IV – It is good for us to be with God Himself

It is good for us to be with Peter, John and James in the presence of God Himself. When we come to the Service with our brothers and sisters, this is like to climb the Transfiguration Mountain and to meet God Himself. He comes to us, calling us to repentance through the Law (Moses), giving us the forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and filling us with His hope (the prophets). He reveals His Holy Son, whom He loves and with whom He is well pleased; and says: “Listen to HIM!” - He envelopes us with the cloud of His grace. It is a unique experience for each of us and it is good for us to be here.

At the same time we have the chance to taste a little of God's glory in the Service, and He always shows us the cross. When Jesus was transfigured

before the disciples, this was one more step in His way to the Calvary. God revealed the two natures of His Son: True God and true man. Jesus was not only the humble Man of Nazareth, but He was the Holy Son of God at the same time; as we confess in the Nicene Creed: “I believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God... who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man...”

Conclusion: A Bible Professor wrote: “It is not by accident that the church has chosen the pericope of the Transfiguration as a concluding text to the Epiphany season and a transition from the glorious light of the Epiphany to the darkness of the passion of our Lord. The church mission is the proclamation of the saving presence of the Lord Christ in the Gospel. But this mission is carried out in the midst of suffering. The church proclaims the Gospel while bearing the cross; it proclaims life facing and experiencing death. And what should encourage the church in its trial and tribulation is the picture of the exalted Christ, the confirmation of the victory of the cross. The church, inspired by the Epiphany Gospel, prepares for Lent, for carrying out its mission in suffering by viewing the exalted Lord Christ. But it can see the exalted Lord only through His suffering and death.” (Series A p. 72).

When the church was dedicated in my first mission, a newly converted Japanese lady came the day before to help. When she saw the church ready, with the carpet and the pews, she reacted: I want to live here! The Psalmist says: “I rejoice with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'” (Psalm 122:1). “One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” (Psalm 27:4).

“Lord, it is good for us to be here!” Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle - Cape Town, 06 March 2011