

Sermon Matthew 17 1 9 Transfiguration 1 Year Series

Text: Matthew 17: 1-9 (v. 7)

Theme: Rise and fear not!

Goal: That God's people depart in peace from the Service, after being in fellowship with God Himself and with our fellows.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I love this story! I feel these words of Peter are mine when I come to the Service in the fellowship with Jesus and with my brothers and sisters: "Lord, it is good to be here!" – For me, - and I would like you to have the same feeling – every Sunday is a Transfiguration Mountain experience: We come together with our fellows, and we see Jesus; we listen to God speaking, we tremble of fear due to our sinful condition, but we rejoice and are relieved with God's love and forgiveness.

Let us relate this story with our Order of Service, and let us be comforted by God's Word and Promises.

I – In the presence of God

"Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves." We are called by God to be His disciples since we were baptized, and we are guided by the Holy Spirit to come together to worship *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. For a while we forget about our daily duties to be "alone" with Jesus. We are in the presence of the Most High and Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a privilege that not all people have. In spite of our unworthiness and sinful condition, God accepts us in His house because we are His children. What He said about Jesus on the Transfiguration Mountain, "This is my Son, whom I love", He said this also when we were baptized: "I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

And we worship this Triune God, invoking and glorifying His Holy name several times during our Order of Service, with Glories, Sanctus, and also in the Psalm, hymns and prayers.

Are you aware that we are in the presence of God when we come to the Service? We come together as a family, baptized children of God, we rejoice to meet each other at our Father's house, and then we worship Him and come together to His Holy Table to share the Holy Food He offers to us for our salvation. Do you like to come to God's house and to be at His presence?

"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

II – Listening to God's Word

We not only worship God, but He wants to talk to us as well. When God acknowledged His Son on the Transfiguration Mountain, He said: "Listen to Him!" Therefore, almost half of our Service is reserved to read God's Word, to listen to it, and to explain and apply it to our daily life.

We listen as God spoke through Moses and the Prophets – the same Moses and Elijah as representative of the Prophets who appeared to Jesus and to the disciples on the Transfiguration Mountain. We have the privilege to hear the Old Testament reading and to know about the great deeds God performed to His people of the Old Covenant. We listen to His promises that He would send the Messiah, His only Son; and we realize that all His promises were accomplished in Jesus, as this story shows as well.

We listen how God spoke through the Apostles in the second reading. The Epistles are based on the Old Testament and on the personal experiences of the Apostles as eyewitnesses, as Peter witnesses in his Epistle for today. He recalls this Transfiguration Mountain experience, that was a life changing experience for him. He wrote: "For we did not follow cleverly invented stories

when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. - We have to trust in the Bible as God's Word, and not just men's writings. Eyewitnesses are always key people to witness when a crime happens. Much more we have to trust in the Biblical eyewitness of Jesus, His life, death and resurrection!

And we listen to the Gospel, to Jesus Himself speaking to us. We cannot see Him in splendor and shining clothes as the disciples saw Him on the Transfiguration Mountain, but we are sure of His presence with us and we are blessed as Jesus said to Thomas:

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Luther wrote: *Therefore, it is established here that the apostles were assured by God that their Gospel was God's Word. And here it is also shown that the Gospel is nothing else than a sermon about Christ. Accordingly, one should listen to no other sermon; for the Father wants no other sermon. "This is my beloved Son," He says; "listen to Him. He is your Teacher."* (Phil Brandt, pp.25,26).

III – Forgiven, we depart in peace

This story and our Service wouldn't be complete if Jesus hadn't said: "Get up. Don't be afraid." - "When the disciples heard this (the voice of God), they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up", he said. "Don't be afraid."

We are not worthy to be in God's presence and to see Jesus' glory. We are not worthy to listen to the prophets and to God Himself. Our sinful condition puts us downcast and we are scared. But God, in His mercy and love, comes to our aid. He

forgives our sins in the Holy Absolution at the beginning of the Service, making us worthy by His grace to worship Him. When we fell down kneeling before the altar and tremble when we come to the Holy Communion, Jesus Himself touches us with His body and Blood and says: Get up; do not be afraid. Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.

And the blessing puts upon us the name of our God Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the rest of the week. - Sorry for the “heresy” that I will say: I would like that the Blessing would be effective only for one week, like some medicaments that you have to repeat after each 12 hour. This would bring all people every Sunday to God’s house to repeat the dose and to be strengthened for the coming week. But God is gracious and extends His blessings upon His children even if they are sometimes not aware of the precious opportunity they are missing.

Conclusion: In our worship experiences, between that Invocation of God’s name, and the Benediction by which we put the name of God on the people, there is a holy hour, a moment when we simply are in the presence of God. This is not about our doing, but God’s doing. (Phil Brandt, p. 67).

Peter wanted to stay on the top of the mountain with Jesus and the Prophets; but glory without cross is impossible. We have to be reminded of the end of the journey. It is not in a cross, with Golgotha’s bile and vinegar, but in a glorious resurrection. (P. 64).

Similar is our journey. It is good to be here, but we have to face the world and its challenges and temptations. But we have to be sure that once we will share the glory the disciple’s experienced on the top of the mountain and even more in the heavenly home of our gracious Father, where we will worship and listen to Him for everlasting. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 5th February 2017

