

“Jesus’ Transfiguration Teaches How We Share in His Glory”

(Matthew 17:1-9 – Transfiguration – February 15, 2026)

Matthew 17:1-9 – ¹Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ²and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” ⁶And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” ⁸When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”

Dear Redeemed in Christ, who came to win a place for us in His heavenly glory:

If you were to make a graph showing a person’s emotions, it might look like a series of mountains and valleys. There will be up times, when we feel like everything is going great, and our high will never end. But there will be down times too, when we feel like everything is going badly, and we will never see any good again.

This will always be true for Jesus’ followers in this world. It was true for the disciples. They followed Jesus through good and bad times, highs and lows. They saw His glory as He performed miracles and people flocked to Him with smiling faces. But they also saw His humiliation and suffering as He met the angry faces of those who wanted to kill Him.

Consider the swing of emotion recently, as Jesus had begun to tell His disciples about His coming arrest and crucifixion by enemies; but He assured them that He would rise from the dead the third day (Matthew 16:21). Such morbid news made the line on the disciples’ emotional graphs fall steeply into a deep valley. It was not the glorious experience they had expected with Jesus. That is why Peter exclaimed: “*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*” But Jesus rebuked Peter: “*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.... If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*” (Matthew 16:22-24).

We see those emotional mountains and valleys again in our text as Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him up a high mountain. What a moment of glory on the Mount of Transfiguration! From here the disciples could see that the future was bright, and life from here on would be nothing but glory! Little did they know how soon they must descend

with Jesus to the valley of humiliation ending at Mount Golgotha and the cross, at which point it would seem like life from here on would be nothing but darkness!

We too will experience ups and downs as we follow Jesus in this world with our hearts set on heaven. But no matter what this life may bring, **“Jesus’ Transfiguration Teaches How We Share in His Glory”**: 1) **Not by experiences of earthly glory, 2) But by believing His heavenly promises.**

1) Not by experiences of earthly glory

Here six days after Jesus told His disciples the depressing news of His coming death, the emotional climate changed drastically. Up on a high mountain, as the disciples looked on: *“He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light”* (vs. 2).

The disciples had seen glimpses of Jesus’ glory in His miracles of healing the sick, casting out demons, calming storms, raising the dead, etc. But here, His divine glory shone from within Him as never before. They saw what Scripture teaches about Jesus as God’s Son: *“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9). This ordinary looking Son of Man, who lived and walked humbly on earth, this Son of God in our flesh, was suddenly too bright to look at.

If that were not enough, *“behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him”* (vs. 3). These Old Testament prophets stood with the glorified Lord almost within touch of the disciples. It was an experience of heaven on earth! Caught up in the thrill of the moment, Peter blurted out: *““Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”* (vs. 4). He wanted to keep his emotions soaring to heavenly heights. Surely from now on, following Jesus in this world would mean glory!

We can understand the emotion. When the Lord blesses us with mountaintop experiences, when we experience earthly glory and everything is great, it is easy to say: *“It is good for us to be here,”* Jesus. Maybe it is when we experience good health, a happy home life surrounded by loved ones, success in pursuits, and times of plenty. Based on evidence we see and feel, we are caught up in the rapturous assurance that God is smiling on us, and we say: *“It is good for us to be here,”* Jesus. Let us put up shelters and abide here forever. Let us make the feeling of heaven on earth permanent.

Ironically, in the midst of this glorious mountaintop experience, Luke’s account says Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about His coming death at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Soon He would lead the thrilled disciples down the mountain to the valley of the shadow of death, all the way to His cross, where He must suffer to save sinners.

Like those disciples, how quickly we can forget Jesus' words that following Him in this world means the cross must be born before the real crown of glory can be worn. When we find ourselves descending the mountain with Jesus into the valley of the cross, trial, and tribulation, how quickly our attitude can change. We begin to say, "It is *not* good for us to be here," Jesus. Where He leads, we must see our Savior in His humiliation and suffering and be persecuted ourselves. Where He leads, we must fight the good fight of faith against the temptations of Satan and the world. Where He leads, we must daily crucify our sinful flesh by repentance. How often, like Peter, we rebuke Jesus for leading us in the way of the cross. We say, "It is *not* good for us to be here," Jesus. How often, our faithfulness fluctuates as quickly as the line on our emotional graph.

No, sharing in Jesus' glory is not rooted in experiences of earthly glory, which come and go. It is interesting that even in the disciples' mountaintop experience, they actually felt great fear in the presence of divine glory. When a voice came from the bright cloud saying, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*" the disciples "*fell on their faces and were greatly afraid*" (vs. 5-6). Things were getting a bit too close to God. Sinners cannot stand at ease before the bare glory of God.

Contrary to the way many people believe, as sinners we cannot expect to appear in the presence of God's glory and dwell with Him in heaven on our own terms. God's holy light shines through our very being and exposes every unholy misdeed in our life, every wrong and shameful thought in our heart. Though unseen to our eyes, God is always near in His glory, with His all-seeing eye. Like those disciples, we cannot stand so boldly before His bare glory. Our conscience bears witness to our sin and guilt and the judgment we deserve, and we can only fall on our faces before Him.

But at this point, the humbled disciples heard a welcome voice: "*Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.'* When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only" (vs. 7-8). We do not share in Jesus' glory by experiences of earthly glory. Even our greatest mountaintop experiences, when it feels like a heaven on earth, do not assure us of peace with God. The only thing that quiets our fears and gives us peace in the presence of His glory, is when we hear the tender voice of Jesus and believe His heavenly promises.

2) But by believing His heavenly promises

This why, as God spoke from the cloud of glory, He said: "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*" (vs. 5). The Father points sinners to the words of His Son, our Savior, who goes to the cross to take away our sins. There alone, He gives peace to our troubled hearts.

For in His Gospel, Jesus declares the salvation He has won for us. To us sinners, God sends His Son with Good News that all our sins are forgiven. Jesus has done for us what

we could not do for ourselves. As God's Law says, "Be holy and faithful," Jesus says, "Hear Me: I have been holy and faithful for you. By My obedience, I have become your righteousness." As God's Law says "The wages of sin is death," Jesus says, "Hear Me: I suffered that death for you. I descended to deepest humiliation, obedient unto death on a cross (Philippians 2:8), so you will never have to die that death." If we fear death, Jesus says: "Hear Me: just as I rose from the dead and My Father has exalted Me to His right hand; so also, I will raise you up one day to share in My heavenly glory" (John 14:3).

As we follow Jesus in this world, like those first disciples we will experience mountains and valleys. Our circumstances can change day by day. Our emotional graph can fluctuate hour by hour. But as we hear Jesus, His Word of salvation never changes.

For this reason, when Peter wrote about Jesus' Transfiguration years later, he did not focus so much on the experience of seeing Jesus' glory on the mountain. Rather, he focused on our ability to hear Jesus' enduring Word in Holy Scripture to this day. He wrote in 2 Peter 1:18-19: "*We heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*" Where do you and I see Jesus' glory as our Savior today? In His unchanging Word of prophecy, in His Holy Scripture!

It is the same today as in the days of Moses and Elijah, those two Old Testament prophets who stood with Jesus on the mountain. They testified that Jesus was fulfilling the salvation long prophesied. God always had revealed His salvation in His Word. Even those living in Jesus' day could not rightly see His glory or believe His salvation apart from His Word. It is the same for us: Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). The Word of God who became flesh and revealed His glory in this world, still reveals His glory as our Savior in His Gospel. Through His Word, the Holy Spirit gives us faith and eternal life with Jesus. We share in His glory, not by experiences of earthly glory, but by believing His heavenly promises.

One day, like Moses and Elijah, and every believer who has gone before us, we will appear with Jesus in heavenly glory. Faith will turn to sight. Earthly crosses will be changed into heavenly crowns of glory. We will be like Jesus, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Our bodies will be raised in glory, transfigured to shine like the sun with Jesus in His Father's Kingdom (Matthew 13:43; Philippians 3:21). Then, our emotional graph will always show our spirits soaring in heaven's never-ending joy!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.