

*“Living in the Presence of Jesus”*

Text: Mark 9:2-9

Years ago the communist government in China commissioned an author to write a biography of Hudson Taylor with the purpose of distorting the facts and presenting him in a bad light. They wanted to discredit the name of this noted missionary. As the author was doing his research, he was increasingly impressed by Taylor’s saintly character and godly life, and he found it extremely difficult to carry out his assignment with a clear conscience. Eventually, at the risk of losing his own life, he renounced atheism and became a Christian.

In the Wednesday morning Bible class we studied King Asa. He followed the example of King David for the writer said of him: “And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done.” (I Kings 15:11) He was known for his reforms of worship practices of his day and other sinful practices of his immediate father, Abijam. He knew who he was to follow.

Scripture is filled with good examples for us, as well as bad ones. The greatest of all is seen in our text for Transfiguration as the true glory of Jesus is seen in the presence of his disciples. His transfiguration gave hope and encouragement to his disciples, comfort to us, and an ever growing imitation of our Savior as we are-

**LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS**

**I The glory of Jesus is a sight to behold**

**II. The glory of Jesus is for our learning**

**I.**

**A.** Sometimes our vision is clouded by our circumstances. We experience a set-back and we are not sure that we can go on. We go on a diet, but lack the discipline for dieting. This is complicated

by any number of quick fixes that appear which promise results without any effort on our part. So the question becomes how much is required of me and how will I be inconvenienced.

After St. Peter's great confession of faith in chapter 8, Jesus told the disciples what this mission would call for. He also informed them of the cost involved for them. These were hard lessons for the disciples. The same Peter who had boldly confessed his faith in Jesus had to be reprimanded by his Savior. His vision had been clouded. The Transfiguration made the person of Jesus very clear to Peter, James, and John.

Now, two very interesting things happened. St. Mark says that Jesus was transfigured: "His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them." It much like getting a white shirt, blouse, or top. The comparison of them with the other white clothing is rather stark. The glory of Jesus was much greater than that at this moment. The second interesting event is that Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus. The disciples were terrified at these two events. First there was the great glory of Jesus and then these two noted saints of the Old Testament, long gone from the scene, actually talking with Jesus.

**B.** What did this mean? The transfiguration of Jesus is the one moment of time when his true glory was allowed to show through the human form of Jesus. The disciples could see who Jesus really was. The things Jesus had told them and the things he asked of them had a greater and fuller meaning now.

Moses and Elijah are the representatives of the Law and the Prophets. He spoke words that pointed to the coming of Jesus and what he would accomplish. On this mountain we have the greatest fulfilled prophecies as Jesus was about to accomplish the salvation of the world.

**C.** What will we do with this good news? As we live in the presence of Jesus, God's own Son, how will we respond? On this occasion, the disciples were running through any number of emotions. First of all there was fear. How would we not also feel that in the presence of the glory of Jesus? After the giving of the 10 Commandments, the people below Mt. Sinai were startled by all

that they saw. They said to Moses: “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” (Exodus 20:19)

Then there is the matter of these two Old Testament giants which must have brought great joy. Both are captured in the words of St. Peter: “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Eventually the disciples would respond as we do, in faith rather than in fear. As we see the glory of Jesus, we see him for who he is and know that his glory has been seen in the light of his love for you and teaches us about what it means to be living in his presence.

## II.

**A.** As you and I see the glory of Jesus, it is as they say “a teachable moment”. We are taught what we are, what we are to grow into and what others are to become because of him. Seeing the glory of Jesus would give great urgency to the work of the disciples. St. Peter would later say in his second epistle: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye witnesses of his majesty.” (II Peter 1:16)

These disciples had the double benefit of hearing God the Father speak his blessing upon Jesus as well as hearing Moses and Elijah speaking to him of what he would accomplish. St. Luke says in his account of the Transfiguration: “And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:30-31)

Standing as we are now in the presence of the Savior Jesus Christ, though unseen to us, we know that there is a purpose to our lives and the work we do in this congregation. God stands behind his promises to go with us as we listen to the words of Jesus for our lives.

**B.** These men were certainly changed by this. It was not merely a spectacular emotional event. It was the fulfillment of God’s promises. Peter, James, and John knew for certain whom Jesus was, and you do too.

On Wednesday we will move into the Lenten season. We will remember our Lord's suffering on our behalf. The real reason for all of this is our sin, which should make us sad. They are the reason for his suffering and death, but the season, as we all know, will reach its culmination in Jesus' victory on Easter Sunday. I remember a discussion with a young lady in the last congregation I served years ago. She didn't understand the somber mood of Lent, for she said, "After all, Pastor, we know Jesus rose from the dead!" Still the focus remains that there may be even a greater joy on Easter.

**B.** The world that we live in is darkened by sin. The light of Jesus Christ has come into this darkened world. It was dramatically seen on this day by Peter, James, and John. Our city has seen quite a celebration in the last week, even with a presidential appearance. Be it world leaders, athletes, or movie stars, many will do almost anything to get in their presence. As we know a greater presence is with us always. As we have seen the light of our Savior, we can shed that light on others.

God's people are that way. Moses was radiant after he had been in God's presence. (Exodus 34:29) The prophet Daniel said: "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

In one of my catechisms I have a note which says: "If we are saints before God by faith in our Savior, we should strive in our lives to be saints before men." As we have known the joy of that presence, may our lives always reflect who we are and in whose presence we live. In Jesus' name. Amen.