



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

March 6, 2011

Last Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon Text: [Exodus 24:12, 15-18](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Exodus 24:12, 15-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 110](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Peter 1:16-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 17:1-9](#)

### Listen To A Tale of Two Mountains

On both you will find glory

The glory is not the same

What is the most glorious sight you can think of that you have ever seen? Is it watching the sun rise or set on the ocean or over the mountains or on a lake when you are out fishing? Is it seeing the birth of one of your children? What is the most glorious thing you've ever seen? Think of it, but I'm telling you that the most glorious thing you've ever seen isn't going to touch, no matter how great it was, the glory that was revealed from our God on these two mountains that we heard about in our First Lesson and in our Gospel today.

"Cavod YHWH" (מִיְהוָה לֵשׁ הַלִּיהִתָּה תֵא) is the Hebrew term for "the glory of the Lord." Cavod YHWH...one of the few Hebrew phrases I can remember, just because it sounds so cool. Cavod YHWH...that sounds impressive. The glory of the Lord appeared in the Old Testament at various times and in various places and it always had to do with the Lord revealing something about his plan of salvation. It always appeared in such a way that it had this effect on people. They stood in awe of it. It seems like they were always searching for words to describe it. Couldn't you hear that this morning? The glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountains. It's like they are trying to describe it but they don't know how. A fire that keeps burning but doesn't consume the top of the mountain...can you picture a mountain that looks like it's on fire on top and it just keeps looking that way for 40 days and 40 nights? I can't begin to imagine what that had to be like.

Then you see the glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. You get the same feeling, don't you? His clothes became white, whiter than lightning. His face shown like the sun. Again it's like they are trying to describe what human words can't describe.

So you see the glory of the Lord on these two mountains. The glory comes from the same place but it's not the same glory. That's important for you and me to remember as we walk with Christ in our life until he calls us to our heavenly home. We have to make sure that we focus on the greater glory and don't keep our feet planted on the wrong mountain...which, I'm sorry to say at times I think we do.

The glory of Mount Sinai...God had given Moses a lot of the teachings, we are told, right before this. These are the people that had seen God's power dramatically in the parting of the Red Sea, the deliverance from Pharaoh's armies. They come now into

the wilderness and got to Mount Sinai and God had started to give them the Law. They had a covenant ceremony right before this where they agreed to everything the Lord had said. And they said, "Yes Lord, we'll serve you. Yes Lord, we'll serve you." Then God says to Moses, "Come up the mountain." It sounds like for six days he stayed there at the edge of the cloud that was covering the top of the mountain. And on the seventh day God says, "Come on up." So he goes up and then he was there 40 days and 40 nights, a number in Scripture that always seems to deal with a spiritual struggle and a spiritual strengthening, whether it's Jesus struggling with Satan in the wilderness or whether it's maybe our upcoming spiritual struggle of Lent, the disciplines of Lent, as we reflect on our sinfulness for 40 days or 40 nights. It's a number that is repeated in Scripture and repeated in our lives.

But the glory of Mount Sinai is undeniable. It looks like a consuming fire. It's the glory that God reveals himself as he gives them a holy and perfect Law...both civil law—how they were to be governed as a nation, and the ceremonial law—how they were to worship the sacrifices and everything in their temple life and tabernacle life at that time, and then also the moral law—God's will for all people of all time. The Law itself was not flawed. The Law itself was holy and good and perfect. Scripture tells us that again and again. There is a glory that is found even today in the Law of God. The Law of God yet today remains good and holy and perfect. Yet, here is the glory of the Lord as this Law is given.

I said a little bit ago that the glory of the Lord is always there when salvation history is being advanced. How is the Law an advancement of salvation history? The Law says "do this," do this, not your best, not as good as you can, not do this better than the person sitting next to you, behind you or in front of you in the church this morning, but do this perfectly and you will live. "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy," he says, "and you will be saved, and you will have eternal life." How is that advancing the way of salvation? You and I can't do that. No one can do that. No one can be absolutely perfect. Sure, we can figure out that maybe we're a little better than Joe Blow that's near us and maybe we do a little better for God than someone else and we get all puffed up in thinking about ourselves that way, but "perfect"? Holy as God says? That we don't do.

That's an us problem. That's not a Law problem. That's not a God problem. The glory of the Law, the glory of the Lord still remains there and constant. God advances salvation history in giving the Law because he shows us that we can't do it. We need someone outside of ourselves to save us. There is no spark in us that needs to be fanned into flame and then we can be holy and perfect and absolute. The only way that is going to happen is if we start watering down God's Word. And for the last how many weeks in our Gospels have we heard Jesus teach the Law and say "You have heard that it's said, do not commit adultery, but I tell you anyone that looks at someone with lust in their heart has committed adultery." He showed us just how absolutely wretched and pitiful we are as sinners.

That's why before he comes and makes his last trip up to Jerusalem, God's glory is revealed on another mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James and John and they go up there on that mountain and all of a sudden there are two other people with them. Moses, the Law giver, the prophet of God, and Elijah, what some would call the greatest prophet of God. They come and they talk with Jesus. We are told in the other parts of Scripture they were talking about his impending departure at Jerusalem, how he was now going to fulfill what they had longed to know but they didn't know perhaps until right then how God would redeem the world, how God would pay for our sins, how God would give us the perfection he demands of us and how he would punish our sins because he is a just God. They talked about Jesus and what he was about to do. You wonder if these prophets were there to encourage Jesus as he walked to Jerusalem to carry our sins and to be abandoned by God himself where God would abandon God on the cross so that our sins would be paid for.

Moses the Law giver, who was there on Mount Sinai, honors Jesus and his greater glory that is revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration because there we see that although the Law came through Moses, grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. But the greater glory that is revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration is the truth that what we cannot do, what we could never do, God does for us. He lives perfectly in our place. He takes our sins to the cross and he dies for us. And his Spirit gives us this faith that makes all of this our own as a gift. This is the greater glory. Glory is both the glory of God, but the greater glory, the glory that is far more important in your life and in my life is the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration because it's there we are shown who is our Savior. And we are reminded that he lived perfectly in our place and that he died in our place.

So my question to you would be, if you have the glory of the Lord, the Holy Spirit has led you to believe that Jesus is your Savior and now you have the glory of the Lord, why are you going to stand with your feet on Mount Sinai when you can stand on the Mount of Transfiguration? I'm telling you, at times we do this. We go back to the Law for our glory. There is a glory in the Law, I'm not denying that. Scripture itself says it. But think of how often we have thoughts or we speak words that...as we talk about our struggles in congregational life at times I hear people say, "You know, if only everyone else would do what I'm doing, then we wouldn't have financial struggles or volunteer struggles." That might be true, but what are you telling people to look at then? When that thought comes into your mind or those words cross your lips, where are you asking other people to look? At the glory of Jesus Christ who lived and died in their place? Or the glory of you and how you serve God and why aren't you more like me?

When you are saying "Look at me and what I have done for my God," you're standing on Mount Sinai, aren't you, on the Law? Is that really how we want to motivate people? With "Do what I do"? I'm a filthy rotten sinner. So are you. We might have our moments when the Spirit works in us and we live to God's glory and it is glorious, but we have plenty of moments when we don't. We all know each other's moments to some degree or another. Do we really want to encourage one another with "Look at me and be more like me"? I don't think so. I think we want to point people to Jesus.

Here's the glory...Jesus loved you so much he lived perfectly for you. Jesus loved you so much he died for you. That's what moves us to action. That's what moves us to want to do what God wants us to do. Not because we have to, but we get to. We get to thank him for his gift of salvation. So don't live on Mount Sinai. Live on the Mount of Transfiguration. Live in the glory that is God's grace and love for you. Focus on him and him alone, not on yourself.

Then you'll live in the glory that is eternal.