



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 2, 2014

Transfiguration - 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](#)

Paranormal Activity: Jesus Appears in His Full Glory

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

God does things quite often in ways that you and I don't really notice or look at as all that spectacular. Did you ever notice that? A splash of water in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and he washes away sins and gives faith to someone who didn't believe. Some ink on a page, and he has the power to provide soul and spirit, joint and marrow, it's the living and active Word of God that convicts us of sin and creates and strengthens faith when you read it or you hear it read to you. A small crunchy piece of bread, a wafer, a sip of wine, and he gives us his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. It doesn't look like much from the outside, but his glory in our lives is awesome. It just doesn't look impressive.

That's why a day like this, on Transfiguration, when we see Jesus reveal his glory there on the Mount of Transfiguration and you hear the Gospel writers trying to figure out how to put into words what you can't explain... his face was shining like lightning I think Luke said. It was white like the sun. His clothes became like the light it said in Matthew. You can tell they are just reaching to try to describe the indescribable. Or in what we are going to talk about in Exodus 24, the consuming fire that doesn't consume that descends on the top of the mountain. It's there and some guy goes off into it and you don't know what in the world is going on. We think stuff like that, that will grab my attention. That will hold onto my attention. I wouldn't fall away then. You wonder why God doesn't act like that all the time. Why doesn't he reveal his glory to us at all times? It's often hidden.

I think today we see that even when that glory was right there in front of their faces, as simple human beings, we have the capacity, we have the desire and the ability to often ignore it. That's what we see when we look at Mount Sinai. The Mount of Transfiguration when the majestic glory comes over it, you saw how the disciples reacted. They fell to the ground terrified. If God was looking at us like that all the time, I don't think we'd be doing real well either. We'd be scared to death as sinners in the presence of a holy God.

So God, in his wisdom, chooses to act in these hidden ways. But just because he has chosen to do this, we dare never forget that this is the God of all glory who from all eternity has been planning and acting to save sinful people like you and me. Today we kind of see how he does it. He does it in ways that are unusual, paranormal to say the

least. You can see it when they are trying to describe Jesus. You can see it when they are trying to describe the mountain. It's not the laws of nature and science that are applied here. This is something bigger than us. This is something beyond us. This is something much larger than us. That's important for us to remember too.

Today we want to see how God reveals his glory in Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, how his glory was there, and what that means for us as we go through our daily lives.

Exodus 24... those words I read to you are pretty straightforward. There's nothing hard to understand there. They are hard to picture. I don't understand a consuming fire that doesn't consume anything. I don't understand the full glory of God. But I can read it and see what God is saying to me. If you don't know the context of how some of this happened and you don't know what happens after it, you might not appreciate everything as much.

They had come out of Egypt. They had seen the glory of God in the ten plagues. They had seen the waters of the Red Sea part and then destroy Pharaoh's army. They had seen God take care of them thus far, and now they are at Mount Sinai, and there God had met with Moses. They set up the tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting. God had met with him and talked to him. He went up on the mountain. He got from God the Law. He brought it back down and told the people, "Here is what God said." Then they had a covenant agreement meal so to speak where God had laid out the covenant. "You do this, this and this, and" God says "I'll do this, this and this for you. I'll be your God. I'll give you the land. I'll be with you. You'll have it forever." He had given them the Law that they were supposed to do. If you remember, the First Commandment, you shall have no other gods, and there was some other stuff in there... you shall not make for yourself any graven images. Can you remember that?

So then after this covenant meal... the elders and God had this meal. In some way, God let them be in his presence, not in his full glory, but in his presence and had this meal with them. Once again we see in Scripture when important things happen, people take the time to eat. That's what we do. After the meal, Moses says to the elders and those guys "You stay here. Joshua, you come with me." God told him to go up on the mountain. So he goes up on the mountain. For six days it sounds like he is camped out on the edge of what appears like a consuming fire. On the seventh day, God says, "Come on up." So Moses goes in. Joshua stays there on the edge. For 40 days and 40 nights he is there. There is this consuming fire thing there, but evidently it either went away for a time or the people just got so used to it they didn't think about it anymore. It was always there. Maybe it wasn't something you noticed after a little while. I don't know if that's how it went, but do you remember what they did when Moses was on that mountain for 40 days and 40 nights? Consuming fire... if only we could see God's glory all the time, then we wouldn't be like those fools were. Well, what did they do? They went and took all the gold that they had, gave it to Aaron, and said "Make us a calf. We have to have something closer to us that we can see that we can focus on."

So they make a golden calf. They decide this is how we are going to worship the “lord,” this golden calf. We are going to do it with drunken sexual revelry, which God had told them not to do in the Law he had just given them. They chose how they wanted to worship God even though his glory was right there in their face. It was echoing in their minds. Yet they still had the capacity to do the exact opposite of what they had just said... “We will do everything the Lord has said.” They did the exact opposite.

We think, how could they do that? How could they do that, those people that had that right there in front of them? Man, if I had the glory of the Lord in front of me, I’d never do that. Do you ever think that to yourself? You’re a fool if you think that, and I’m a fool when I think that. We have something they didn’t have. We have the fulfillment of all the promises. We have the Law that shows us how desperately we need a Savior because God had said “Be holy as I, the Lord your God am holy. Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” They couldn’t make it 40 days and 40 nights. Neither can you. Neither can I. We are sinful wretches. We despise our God and do the exact opposite of what he tells us to do.

You and I have something more than they had. You and I have that ink on a page, right? We have little Bibles we can carry in our backpack or in our front pocket. We can put it on our phone. We can put it on our tablet. We can put it on our computer. We can put it on DVD. We can put it on a CD. We can put it on a cassette. You can probably even find an 8-track if any of you have that left anywhere. We have so many different ways that we can have God speak to us. That’s where his glory is revealed to us, where he shows us “Here’s how much I love you. Here’s how I took away your sins.” Yet you and I at times become indifferent to it because we see it all the time.

You and I become bored with it. You and I say “Hey God? Could you just dress it up a little bit? Same old same old. I know that stuff. Make it a little more entertaining Lord. You have to compete with sitcoms now, God. You have to dress things up a bit.” That’s just the fools that we are.

God in his wisdom chose to work through these ways that don’t impress us because he wants us to focus on the message and not on the means of delivery. The message is incredible. The message is awe inspiring. The message is better than anything that looks like a consuming fire. If you and I become at times bored with it, that’s an indication of what sinners we are, not that our God is messed up.

This is what we see about our God on this day. We see Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and these people grasping at straws trying to explain it. We see our God is bigger than us. We see the top of that mountain look like it’s on fire, but it’s not burning up. Our God is bigger than us. We see our God acting in ways that show he has power that you and I can’t imagine. He can do things that you and I could never dream of. That’s the whole thing we’ve been looking at all through Epiphany, paranormal activity, and his powerful word on that sermon on the mount, and how it shows that he is bigger than we are.

Yet this God, who is so far beyond us, this God, who is a consuming fire who hates sin and hates sinners (as it says in the Book of Psalms), still is a God of grace and love who allows a sinner like Moses... Moses was no better than you or me. He was a murderer when he was in Egypt. He was a sinner like you and me. Yet God allows him to walk into his presence on the top of that mountain and does not consume him.

Our God reveals himself in his Law, in that message of how he hates sin. But our God also reveals himself in grace, in how he shows mercy on those that do not deserve it. Moses didn't deserve it. You don't deserve it. I do not deserve it. But he pours it out on us day after day.

On the top of that other mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration, when all of a sudden... talk about something paranormal. Elijah and Moses show up even though they've been dead for hundreds of years, thousands of years in Moses' case. They show up and they talked to Jesus (we are told in Luke). It was about his impending departure. I don't mean his going down off the mountain. It's talking about going to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of the world, to be buried and then to rise again. That's our God's grace.

He has all this power, all this glory, and he sets it aside because he wants you and me to be forgiven and at one with him. He sets it aside so that he can suffer and die the death you and I should die. This is love! This is grace! This is mercy! This is what gives you and me confidence to face daily life. As we are going through daily life, we have things that take our attention off of the glory of God, this consuming fire, and puts it on the troubles we have. Whether it's worries about relationships we are having, whether it's the diagnosis the doctor gave us, whether it's not knowing how we're going to pay for this or pay for that or what we're going to do, we have all kinds of things that trouble us. If we are honest with ourselves, at times it brings to our mind that thought of "God, where are you? Don't you love me? Why are you letting this happen?" We have these things that we struggle with that take our attention off of God's glory and put it on ourselves and how we are going to get through this.

You and I are fool enough to think at times we can get through it on our own. So we try to handle it. Half the time when we try to handle things on our own, we mess it up and make it even worse, don't we? Our God is a God of patience and love who comes to us and says "Bring those doubts, those uncertainties. Bring your guilt, your anxiety. Bring your troubles, your trauma, your drama. Bring it to me. Bring it to me and meet me at my empty tomb. There you will see that I won. I do have all this glory. And I use it for you."

As we go through Epiphany, we see his glory now. As we go through Lent, we'll see him suffer and die. We'll feel pain because we know it's our sins that caused him to do it. But we do it with one eye always on that empty tomb. Our God is a God of glory and he uses his glory for you and for me. That's an amazing truth.

When you're facing the struggles of daily life, don't forget that truth. Live in that truth that the glory of God is a glory that exists to be a blessing for you. He's promised to rule over all things for your eternal good, not your earthly happiness, not what is going to make you feel better on Monday, but what is going to be your eternal good for all your life. Trust him. Believe him. When we start to doubt it, get on your bike or scooter, your Vespa, your car, whatever it is, and get to that empty tomb and look in again and see the love he has for you. Amen.