

Sermon for The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Date: February 14, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: 2 Kings 2:1–12

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12–18; 4:1–6

Gospel Reading: Mark 9:2–9

Sermon Text: Mark 9:2–9

Sermon Title: Jesus Ain't Junk

Introit: Psalm 99:1-5; Antiphon: Psalm 99:9

Hymns:

LSB 435 – Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

LSB 414 – 'Tis Good Lord, To Be Here

LSB 537 – Beautiful Savior



Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



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Text: Mark 9:2–9

After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

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Grace, peace, and mercy be yours in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

I once read a story about a couple who received some ugly drinking glasses as a wedding gift. These glasses were so ugly the couple wondered if they had unknowingly offended the givers. Why else would anyone have given these ugly things? The couple thought about putting the gift in the closet so they could re-gift to someone else, maybe as a prank. Eventually, they decided to use the ugly glasses for everyday use. They tossed the ugly glasses around. They taught their children how to drink with them. Nobody cared if the ugly glasses got knocked around. In fact over time the ugly glasses became a source of entertainment.

Then, one day the couple joked to another person about the ugly glasses. The friend looked sick. "It sounds like the ugly glasses are a Hummel collector's item. I don't know, but I'll check." She checked. The ugly glasses were Hummel's. The ugly glasses, in the complete set, were worth well over \$1,000. The ugly glasses... well they were transformed. From that moment the ugly glasses were handled differently. They were put up from children's fumbling fingers. Though valuable all along, in the eyes of this couple the ugly glasses had been changed. Trash had become treasure.

In our Gospel reading today we see a similar picture. We are told about Peter, James and John following Jesus up a mountain. That was not unusual. For three years Peter, James and John followed Jesus just about wherever He went. They have probably become accustomed to odd things happening. You never knew what was going to happen next. One day Jesus would talk to a storm. That's not the surprise. The surprise is that the storm listened.¹ Another day, Jesus walked on the water.² Then there was the day He brought a dead person back to life,³ or the time He touched a leper, and healed him.⁴ Jesus was almost always a surprise.

As many times as the disciples had been surprised in the past nothing prepared them for what they experienced the day they followed the Savior up a mountain. At the summit, they saw something. These disciples saw something that put Jesus in a new light.

Now, before I explain what the disciples saw, I want to ask: What do you see when you look at Jesus? Some saw Him as a "rabbi," a teacher.⁵ If, when you look at Him, you only see a teacher, you do not see His true value. Some saw Him as a

1 Mark 4:37ff
2 Matthew 14:25
3 Luke 17:11
4 Matthew 8:2
5 John 1:38

religious leader, a representative from God or some kind of prophet.⁶ If all you see in Jesus is a prophet, you are selling the Savior short. Some see Him as a spare tire they keep in the trunk. He should always be there when you need Him, ready to be called on in an emergency, ready to help them get to where they're going, but He never taking up much room.

What do you see when you look at Jesus? If it is anything less than, or if it is anything other than, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, you are still seeing trash and not treasure.

That day, on the mountain, the disciples saw something which changed the way they viewed Jesus. First, Jesus' face started to glow. Not with a night-light kind of glow that's gentle to the eyes; not with a reflected light coming from a setting sun. Jesus shown with a brilliant, shield-your-eyes kind of brightness.

The disciples look again. Now they see Jesus conversing with the great Old Testament prophets: Moses and Elijah. The disciples had seen many things as they followed Jesus, but they had never seen anything that would prepare them for their Teacher glowing and talking with two of the greatest, and long gone, leaders of Israel.

By now, the disciples are frightened. "What's could happen next?" Then a cloud appeared. From inside this cloud a voice speaks. The disciples may not have had a college education, but they knew voices coming from clouds was not normal.

They would have remembered that a voice from a cloud was the kind of thing their ancestors experienced when they were following God through the wilderness. It wouldn't have taken them long to figure out that when your Teacher is glowing with light, and visiting with ancient prophets, and a voice is coming from a miraculously formed cloud, it is in everybody's best interest to pay very close attention. They did. They listened. The voice of the heavenly Father said, "This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him."

Stop there for a moment. The claim of that command places you and every human being at a crossroad. No longer can Jesus be just a teacher, just a philosopher; just a prophet; just a good guy. Either He is the Son of God, and we should listen to Him, or the words are a lie and should be rejected. There are no other options.

If you can't tell the difference between God's reality and the world's lie, I'm sorry. The words from the cloud still demand an answer. Is Jesus the Son of God? In anticipating of your question, God gave hundreds prophecies, hundreds, even

6 Matthew 16:14

thousands of years before the Savior was born. All of those prophecies were designed to help questioners, like you. God was saying, “When you see in one person all of these prophecies being fulfilled, you’ll know: This is My Son, this is your Savior.”

If you take the time and you should take the time, you will find those prophecies, every one of them, is fulfilled in Jesus. At the beginning of His life, according to prophecy, Jesus was born of a virgin. At the end of His life, according to prophecy, He was crucified and none of His bones were broken. Over and over again, the Gospel writer Matthew goes out of His way to say, “This happened so Scripture would be fulfilled.”

Is Jesus the Son of God? Yes, He is. Do not doubt. He is the Son of God. If nothing else will convince you, on Easter Sunday stand in front of His empty tomb and know that Jesus defeated death so that all who believe in Him could be saved.

To stop the story of Jesus’ resurrection, all that was necessary was for someone, anyone, to produce His body. Jesus’ enemies could not come up with a corpse. There was none to produce. Jesus’ followers knew there was no dead body to be found. They knew Christ had risen. You couldn’t rise. I couldn’t do it. Only the Son of God can do that. If you doubt me, go to a cemetery and wait. See what happens. I’m thinkin’ nothing’s gonna’ happen. Yet because of an empty tomb, I know this is God’s Son. That’s why I know I’d better listen.

I’d better listen to Him when He says, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me.”⁷ Hear Him. Jesus is not saying He is one of many ways that lead to the Father. Jesus is not claiming to be one of many equally acceptable truths. He is the only way, the only truth, that takes us to life eternal. Hear Him.

Hear Him when He says, “I am the bread of life.”⁸ Not *a* bread of life, *the* bread of life, the only food that can satisfy our spiritual appetites. Hear Him. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”⁹ Jesus is not saying He is one of many lights. He is the only light that can take you out of your present darkness into a life of light.

If your life feels aimless and meaningless, don’t be shocked. That’s the way it is without Jesus. If you want more, if you need more, call on Jesus. Today the heavenly Father wants you to see Jesus for what He really is, the greatest treasure you will ever know. Today the heavenly Father is asking you to be a disciple, to follow Jesus, your Savior and your Lord.

7 John 14:6

8 John 6:35

9 John 8:12

An old man, and his grown son, were cleaning out the basement. “Come on son, let’s get that old radio out to the curb.” The father was referring to an antique radio that had been cluttering up the basement since before the son was born. Almost five feet tall, the massive 1930’s radio had turned wooden legs and sliding doors. It was quite a work of cabinetry. Nevertheless, powered by tubes and unable to get FM, the radio was a nuisance, serving no function other than taking up a lot of space.

Those who like to keep everything will shudder to hear that they carried the radio out to the curb. The next day was garbage day and it would be gone. The garbage man never got the chance. Within 10 minutes, a truck pulled up and two men, almost dancing with glee, loaded up the radio and disappeared. Those men knew just how valuable that tower of tubes really was. One person’s trash became their treasure.

That’s what the Savior wants to do for you today. He wants you to reject the world that says “Jesus is junk.” He wants you to believe, with all your heart, believe the saving truth: Jesus is God’s Son, the Savior of the world, and your truest treasure.

Amen.

**Proclaim God’s Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God’s love and
Serve all people**



As we gather:

Jesus was a really great guy, with really great abilities, and really great faith. That's what the disciples saw in Jesus. A really great guy. That's what they saw, until Jesus took three of them up a mountain. There He was transformed before their very eyes. They no longer saw a great guy, they saw God. Jesus in all His splendor and glory, shining like the sun. Often we think of Jesus as our friend, and He is that, but we must also see Him as God, the Author of all that is, and ensure that we honor Him that way.

Builder Links:

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Children's Sermon

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

