

Luke 9:28-36 ⁸ Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. ³³ Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" -- not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" ³⁶ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

There are many Sundays in the church year that are set aside to meditate upon certain events in Christ's life. Today is one such day. We set aside today to think about the Transfiguration of our Lord. Transfiguration Sunday is always the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany and therefore, consequently also always the last Sunday before Lent begins. Our text from Luke truly carries the themes of both Epiphany and Lent. It shows to us a bright vision that far outshines another other Epiphany in its ability to show us exactly who Jesus is in relation to the Father. But it also lets us listen in on an enlightening conversation which begins to drag us towards Lenten thoughts of Jesus' passion for us. And today, it is appropriate that we speak of both themes. Today we seek to see the Transfiguration as a bright vision and an enlightening conversation. In so doing we seek to solidify the epiphanies we have been having during this season and at the same time prepare our hearts for Lent.

In our text, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to a mountain to pray. Oh to be sure, they had done this several times before. And as with many times, as Jesus began to pray, Peter, James, and John began to nod off. But when they awakened, they suddenly realized that something quiet glorious had happened as Jesus prayed and they slept. They awoke to Jesus glowing white and standing next to Him were Moses and Elijah talking. Peter was amazed at the sight and didn't want it to end. So as Elijah and Moses were beginning to leave, Peter suggested that they not leave, but rather that he would build them a place to stay right there for a while. He didn't really know what he was saying, but what he did know it that he didn't want this event, whatever it was, to end. But just then a cloud enveloped them and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved son. Listen to him." Seconds later, Jesus stood there alone. Yes, it was a bright vision indeed. And it confirmed again what had been spoken all the way back at Jesus' baptism, that Jesus was God's son. And this time not only was the voice from heaven heard, but Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, were right there to confirm the voice. This Jesus

was the One whom Moses and Elijah had prophesied about coming, God's only Son, the Messiah. It was for Peter that final confirmation before the trip to Jerusalem that the One he was following was God's son.

And for us as well, it is the final epiphany of this season. We have seen Jesus be baptized with Father and Spirit present. We watched him turn water to wine. And we gazed in as He caused a miraculous catch of fish. But what those events caused us to realize, this transfiguration confirms as absolute truth. The One we follow is more than a great teacher or one savior among many. He is God's Son, the only way to the Father. The bright vision confirms that truth.

When important people talk in our day and age it is often behind closed doors. No one else is let in on their conversation. But today this is not the case. We know exactly what three very important people, Jesus, Elijah and Moses, had met to talk about. Luke tells us that all three standing in their glory talked about Jesus' exodus or departure that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Yes, out of all the things they could have talked over, they talked about Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension in Jerusalem. And in this way, the conversation was enlightening indeed. Peter had just recently confessed that Jesus was the Christ, but this conversation helped fill in the details of exactly what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ. Jesus had just told Peter that in order for him to fulfill all that was spoken of the Christ He had to die and be raised three days later. Now on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah confirmed this truth, and God the Father beckoned Peter and the others to listen to Jesus. Yes Peter was called to put away his mistaken impressions of what the Christ should do, and listen to the Christ right before him who was revealing day by day what He would do.

As we prepare to enter Lent again we should also focus on listening to Jesus. I encourage you in your home to really place the Word of God daily before your family in this time of preparation. For in that Word we can learn exactly what Jesus came to do and how that should affect our lives. We can relearn that Jesus' main focus was the salvation of our bodies and souls, and that it still remains His main focus. Often times, it is easier for us to want a just a shiny Jesus that does what we want when we want it, rather than to accept that the daily events in our lives are the ways in which God is sustaining and keeping us in the faith.

Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus himself were focused on the cross on that Mount of Transfiguration. Their focus on the cross can serve as they example of what we should be about in this season of Lent. Lent is not about giving us candy or TV or whatever. Lent is about focusing on Jesus' death for us. If giving up things can help us to accomplish that goal, it is beneficial. But if that giving up becomes our focus, we have missed the point. Lent is not about our extra effort but Jesus' extra effort for us. Yes, that enlightening conversation on the Mount reminds us that life is all about the cross of Jesus.

Today we close the book on the season of Epiphany with the same confidence that we began the season. Jesus is God's only son, His Beloved. That Babe in the manger is now about to become to the Ban

of the cross, all the time remaining the Son of God. And those realizations of Epiphany should truly heighten our appreciation of what happens during Lent and Holy Week. For when we see all of the events of Jesus passion, we are to be reminded that this is not just some man who suffered all these things, but rather God himself who suffered them on our behalf.

And as we close the book on Epiphany we open the book to Lent. This Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, we begin our journey to the cross. Today as we ponder the conversation on the mount of transfiguration, we begin to make the cross not just the focus of the lessons and the services during that season but the focus of our lives during that season as well.

Yes this Transfiguration Sunday gives us a bright vision and an enlightening conversation to ponder. May our meditation serve to bring us to true thankfulness for the Son of God that now goes to Jerusalem to accomplish our salvation. Amen.