

**LOOK TO THE CROSS AND SEE ONLY JESUS!**  
**Transfiguration Sunday (6 March Anno Domini 2011)**  
**Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor**  
**Matthew 17:1-9**

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

***"And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James, and John his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves."*** After six days, that's how our text starts. Something happened six days before that's connected to our text! When you read phrases like: "and six days later or eight days later" it clues you that you need to go back and get the context of what's happening.

So what happened six days earlier? In St. Luke's account of the Transfiguration it says: ***"about eight days after these sayings."*** It's easy to see where St. Luke points us. It's back to the great confession. Jesus asked the disciples, ***"So who do the people say that I am?"*** The disciples' responded, ***"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, a great prophet of long ago has come back to life."*** Jesus then directs His question to them, ***"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" It was Peter who answered, "Thou art the Christ of God"*** (Luke 9:19-20). But our text says six days later. What happened six days before our text?

You might remember that after Peter's great confession Jesus began to speak more plainly, more openly about how He had to go to Jerusalem for, ***"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*** Peter wanted nothing to do with that. He had made the great confession and thought Jesus was going to be the warrior Messiah. A Lord and King over Israel, heaven on earth type Messiah. So Peter tries to dissuade Jesus from what he perceived to be lunacy. In Matthew 16:22-23 it says: ***"And Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you have your mind set not on the things of God, but on the things of man."***

For six days the disciples lived with the gut wrenching news of the necessity of Jesus death in Jerusalem. They had been with Him for three years; what would they do without Jesus? For six days, Peter had to struggle with his willful usurping our Lord's authority. Trying to dissuade Jesus from what was truly good, right, and necessary. Peter was dressed down in front of everyone. Peter who just days before hit a home run confessing: ***"Thou art the Christ!"*** Peter had six days to reflect on his actions and ponder the foreboding words of Jesus, ***"I must go to Jerusalem to be killed."***

**Then, after six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John, up the mountain. And suddenly the glory of God was revealed to them. Jesus clothes and his face shined like the sun brighter than any**

natural light," **Heavenly light shown from Him.**" And that wasn't all. Moses and Elijah appeared. Both bearing witness to who Jesus is, and that indeed there is life after death. The people thought Jesus might be a great prophet of old or Elijah. The great prophet of old is a nickname for Moses. The misconception, the mistaken belief that Jesus is one of them, is done away with right then and there on the Mount of Transfiguration. For standing right in front of them are Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

What a grand and glorious sight. Peter wants to build some shelters and stay there. **"It's good to be here Lord!"** After all it's comfortable to be in the presence of God. Its safe place to be - let's stay and build some dwellings, let's build a cabin.

But Peter forgets far too often. Jesus made it clear He must go to Jerusalem, He must suffer many things, and He must be killed so that on the third day He could rise. Peter forgot that once before and ended up being rebuked, **"Get behind me Satan!"** Maybe Peter was just hoping that if they stayed on the mountain Jesus would come to His senses. We are all like Peter. We tend to forget too. Peter forgot what the Lord said and what He came to do. We forget the Lord's words also!

In Catechism class you learned the 10 Commandments. But do you live them or have you forgotten them? You also learned the creed. *I believe in God the Father almighty creator of heaven and earth.* God created everything and is still active in His creation. But do you feel like God created everything and then just left you to fend for yourself?

*And I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.* Jesus became flesh and blood to live a perfect life for you and to die for all of your sins. But do you forget that? Do you still feel like you are carrying some of the load of your sin around? Have you forgotten He paid for it all!

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.* You are a temple of the Holy Spirit, He dwells in you. Do you feel empowered by the Holy Spirit or have you forgotten that He dwells in you especially during the work week? The Lord uses the Christian Church to impart His gifts of grace through the Word and the Sacraments. Do you come to church to receive grace? Or do you come out of an act of obedience? Do you leave knowing you are forgiven and have eternal life? Or have you forgotten what you receive here? You see, we forget also.

But the Father in heaven doesn't forget. He knows why Jesus has come! Peter wants to forget the journey and says: **"Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."** **While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."**

Like a caring school master speaking to an addle student God says to Peter quiet, listen to my Son. It's amazing how much we can actually hear when you actively listen. Jesus has been talking about going to Jerusalem to suffer many things but did they listen? Jesus path from this Mountain of Transfiguration will take Him to another Mountain, the Mount of Golgotha. And there on the Mount of Golgotha Jesus glory will shine far brighter than it did during Transfiguration. For there at Calvary what He discussed, will take place. And there (†) the disciples will finally hear and understand His words.

I want you to take a moment to actively listen. Fix your eyes on the cross, or maybe better the processional cross. Hear the words as I describe the sounds of Jesus on that other mount. Allow these words to soak into your hearts and minds. Hopefully they will create a picture in your mind as well.

Hear the thud of the heavy wooden cross as it hits the ground, dropped from the back of the bleeding savior. **“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed”** (Isaiah 53:5). They roll Jesus over and lay Him onto the cross. Hear the sounds of the nails being driven through His hands. He doesn’t cry out, but remains silent. **“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth”** (Acts 8:32). Hear the quiet sighs of Jesus as His cross is lifted with His body attached, His full weight now bearing heavily against the nails in His hands and feet. But even greater is the weight of the sin of the world, your sin and mine, bearing down on Him! **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”** (1 John 2:2). Hear Jesus speaking from the cross: **“Father forgive them, they know not what they do!”** (Luke 23:34). And just a few hours later Jesus will utter His final words from the cross with a dying breath. **“It is finished”** (John 19:30).

When Peter, James and John heard God speak they became frightened and hid their faces. They wouldn’t be staying on the mountain. They had a journey ahead. A journey ahead to the words I just shared. Our text says: **“But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”**

It still works that way today. If you want to see God, you must use His prescribed method. And Jesus came and touched them, saying **“Rise, and have no fear.”** Jesus still comes today and touches us and gives us faith to believe. How does He do it? Through the waters of baptism! There in the font, Jesus the Word made flesh is connected to the water. Jesus touches you, covering you with His righteousness. St. Paul says in Romans 6:3-4: **“Or do you not know that all of you who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore you have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so you too might walk in newness of life.”**

You have been touched by Jesus, adopted by God a His very own child. Free to walk in the newness of life. And because we are still like Peter and we forget, the Lord comes to us each and every week in His Word and Sacraments. In the Sacrament of the Altar our Lord reminds of His (†) cross. 1 Corinthians 11:26 **“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”**

Look to the cross and see only Jesus. For Mount Golgotha is the Mount of your Transfiguration. For there (†) Jesus paid the price in full. By His life, His death and His glorious resurrection you are transfigured into a child of God. And here in His Church you are touched by Him every week. For Jesus is present saying: “Arise and have no fear. For all your sins are forgiven. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for Jesus sake and in Jesus name, Amen and Amen!

*The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
AMEN!*

*Please rise for the offertory.*