

You must listen to Jesus, because He is God's Chosen One, the Son on whom the glory of God rests. Stare in wonder as the veil is lifted and Christ's glory breaks through the mask of His humanity. Gaze on the glory of God, and listen to the glorious Son!

Jesus' ministry started out by receiving glory from all who heard Him preach throughout the synagogues, but the glory that comes from men was fading as Jesus began saying things like "The good news is for your enemies, too." in Luke 4, "Woe to the rich." and "Love your enemies." in Luke 6, and "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me." earlier in Luke 9.

People who flocked to the message that this was the year of the Lord's favor fell away when Jesus started talking about how the chief priests and elders would kill Him. The shine on His ministry faded away when He invited people to follow Him to death. They were amazed by the miracles and attracted to the free food, but they didn't want to end up on a cross next to Jesus.

And so evidently, at this point in His ministry, both Jesus and the disciples need encouragement from heaven. Jesus takes the three chief disciples with Him up on the mountain to draw near to God and pray.

Three of the gospels tell this story, but only Luke gives us this emphasis on prayer, an emphasis that wants us to see a connection between *prayer* and *experiencing the glory of God*. As Jesus is communing with God through prayer, glory washes over Him. The appearance of His face is changed, and His clothing becomes blindingly white, like the sun flashing off two feet of snow, like lightning. Even His resurrection glory is not described quite like this; only the glory of the Son of Man in the book of Revelation comes close.

And talking with this glorified Jesus are two men, Moses and Elijah, the great lawgiver and the great prophet, who also appear in glory. They are talking about Jesus' departure, the great Jerusalem *Exodus* (that's the word in Greek) that He had started to reveal to His disciples. Jesus is going on an Exodus journey, and so of course Moses is there. But His Exodus is not through the Red Sea; Jesus will pass through death but somehow, He will mysteriously survive. Of course Elijah is there, who has a unique relationship to death himself. Moses does, too – God Himself buried Moses, and while no living person knew where His remains were buried, there was quite a battle over his body between Michael and Satan. A new Exodus; Death that wasn't really death -

They must have had a lot to talk about! But when the glory descended, it caused Peter, James, and John to be fully awake, even though they had been heavy with sleep just before that. Seeing that Moses and Elijah were getting ready to depart, Peter blurted out his idea about making tents to house the glory of these three men. It wasn't an idiotic thing to say in itself – actually, after Moses led his exodus, Israel made a tabernacle for the glory-cloud of God to dwell

in. Israel even celebrated the Feast of Booths to remind them of when God lived with them in tents in the past, and to prepare them for the future when God would return to dwell with men, so Peter wasn't just babbling mindless drivel. But it was nonsense for two reasons – Moses and Elijah had not come to stay, and as glorious as they were, these men were not meant to share the glory of Jesus. Peter offers to make three tents, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus, but that idea made Jesus a part of the wrong trinity. Jesus doesn't fit *alongside* Moses and Elijah. His glory places Him infinitely *above* them.

And so God swallows Moses and Elijah in the terrifying glory-cloud, and speaks from heaven to identify Jesus: “*This* is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!” When the cloud departs, it is Jesus who stands alone. Don't listen equally to the law, the prophets, and Jesus. Listen to Jesus, to whom the law and the prophets pointed! Three mighty men stand in glory, but God makes Jesus alone His Chosen One! As great as Moses and Elijah were, they are simply witnesses to the Son of God.

This is going to be one of the key challenges that Israel faces – learning that Moses and Elijah take a back seat when Jesus comes. If you remember from the book of Acts, the laws of Moses concerning clean and unclean, concerning circumcision, and concerning the place of the Gentiles were all controversies in the church that were only solved when Jesus was ranked higher than Moses. Galatians is filled with strong language about how a gospel that prioritizes the law of Moses, or even places Jesus and Moses on equal footing, is really no gospel at all. And the book of Hebrews famously hammers home this lesson – no one, not Moses, not David, not the angels, not the prophets – no one can compare to Jesus. Many Jewish Christians were tempted to turn back to Moses, but the book of Hebrews warns them against making this terrible mistake – Moses cannot save you! Only by sharing in Jesus' Exodus by faith can you reach the new Promised Land.

And so God sets Moses, Elijah, and Jesus before the eyes of the three greatest apostles, and tells them to listen to Jesus. Jesus alone is God's Son. Jesus is the Chosen One. Jesus is clothed in the blinding glory of heaven; not borrowed glory, but His own rightful glory. The glory of Jesus is the proof of His superiority. All glory demands attention, whether it's the glory of an exceptional athlete or the glory of a beautiful bride, but *this* glory, the glory that radiates from Jesus on the mountain, is unmatched anywhere else in all the world, and so it demands more than *attention* – it demands *worship*. This glory doesn't place Jesus *among* the mighty men of Israel; it places Him *above* the greatest heroes that Israel has ever known. And so the right response to seeing the glory of Jesus is to *listen* to Him, to *obey* Him, to *worship* Him.

But our challenge today is not that we think too much of Moses or Elijah, but that we think too much of *ourselves*! We are tempted to treat our own desires as more important than the Son

of God. We listen to *them*, instead of *Him*. Because you do not open your sleepy eyes to the glory of Jesus, *you* are the most glorious person you have ever seen! Your voice is the most authoritative voice that you have ever heard! And so you glorify yourself by listening to yourself. Jesus says, “Deny yourself and take up your cross.” Your desires say, “Indulge yourself and take up your couch.” Jesus says “Seek first the kingdom of God.” Your heart says “Seek first the kingdom of you: a comfortable life, a good job, money, sex, power.”

Do you see how even little, everyday sins are the result of misplacing glory, of listening to the wrong person? Jesus says “Do everything without complaining.” At the moment in which something enters our lives that we do not prefer, God says “Listen to Him.” And if we see Jesus as glorious, we will obey. If we do not see Jesus as glorious, then we will listen to ourselves instead. What the Transfiguration shows us is that whether or not we see it, Jesus *is* glorious. It's not that sometimes glory falls on Jesus, and sometimes He isn't glorious. It's that sometimes our eyes are opened to His glory, and sometimes we are blind!

And so when you are tempted to lust, to look at pornography or to give in to sinful desires in your heart, when you want to respond to your children with shouting or slapping, when that resentment towards your husband or wife or neighbor boils up in your heart, know this: God has set Jesus before you in all His glory in the pages of His Word. Refusing to listen to Jesus is to deny the glory of Jesus, which is why even the smallest sin is the greatest rebellion possible – even though you know God, you do not glorify Him as God, but instead give that glory to mortal men by listening to yourself instead of Jesus.

But the Transfiguration is the antidote to the poison of self-glorifying sin. On the mountain, Jesus' glory shines out in brightness that burns away sin like a fog! When you see Jesus exalted and clothed in majesty, sin loses its shine. **A glimpse of glory is a weapon in the war against sin.** Think about it this way: when Jesus says that He must suffer and die, Peter hears an ordinary man. A good rabbi, an influential teacher, yes, but not the glorious Son of God whose voices strips the forest bare and makes the deer give birth. We know this because at that moment, Peter listens to Satan instead, and utters the most ridiculous phrase ever: “No, Lord.” But when Jesus' glory is revealed on the mountain, no one is *correcting* Jesus! You cannot stare at the true glory of Jesus and come up with any other response than “Yes, Lord.”

What we need to do is to remember in the dark what we learn here in the light. Jesus' glory is always there; we don't always see it. We grow heavy with sleep in the Christian life, and close our eyes, but even when we do not see it, Jesus is still glorious. Listening to Him and worshiping Him with our full obedience is still the right response, because He is still glorious, even when His glory is veiled.

And so notice again that Jesus' glory is revealed *through prayer*. It is in prayer that we enter into communion with God, where we draw near to God, where we are closest to the glory of God! Remember, this is not just true of Jesus. When Moses drew near to God, his face began to reflect God's glory, too! And so in your fight against sin, when you are losing sight of God's glory, when you are starting to listen to the Serpent's voice instead of the Son's voice, you need to pray! Like Moses, ask God to show you His glory! Listen to God speak through His Word and remind you of the glory of Jesus.

Many of you have already noticed this connection between a life of faithful prayer and success in overcoming sin. The more you pray, the less you sin! (Remember, praying is not just talking – prayer is just as much if not more about listening to God.) You've seen the opposite, too: your struggles with sin are hardest when your prayer life is sleepiest. Here's why: prayer draws you close to the glory of God. In prayer, you are coming to God in humility, and opening your heart to hear His voice, and you experience the glory of God. When you forget to pray, or neglect to pray, or resist praying, you lose sight of Christ's glory. His glory remains; you just can't see it.

I'm so thankful that I can pray anywhere, anytime, but usually, I don't. And I'm not the only one. There are many opportunities that I miss, and I need to be reminded that when I miss opportunities to pray, I miss opportunities to experience the glory of God. And so I'm thankful that our Church calls us to pray. Morning Prayer, the Ladies' Prayer Breakfast – these are times where the church is calling you to draw near to God, so that you will see the glory of God and so that you can listen to Jesus. If you are hungry for the glory of God, you will be hungry to pray. So do not miss what happens on the Mount of Transfiguration: the glory of Christ is revealed in prayer.

The point is that **a glimpse of glory is a weapon in the war against sin**. We sin when we don't listen to Jesus. We don't listen to Jesus when we lose sight of His glory. We lose sight of His glory when we do not draw near to God in worship, in prayer.

But a second point is like it: **a glimpse of glory is fuel for faith**. Fighting sin is the negative side; trusting Jesus is the positive side. When we see Jesus as glorious, we don't doubt that following Jesus is the way to go. Remember, Jesus has just announced that the path that He is on will lead to death. If you have no experience of the majesty of Jesus, you will not have much confidence to walk the path with Him. But once you have seen the face of Jesus shining with heavenly glory, then you will follow Him anywhere, even to death.

Here's a trivial illustration, but hopefully it makes the point: a couple years ago Pepsi began a series of commercials starring an NBA basketball player disguised as an old man who goes to play pickup basketball. Nobody on the court thinks that this old codger can help them win,

until he starts to play. His hidden talent is revealed, and the outward appearance becomes irrelevant. Once you know who he really is, it no longer matters much younger or taller or stronger the opponent appears. If he's on your team, you're going to win.

This is what happens on mountain – the truth about Jesus becomes visibly evident, providing a firm foundation for faith. Peter, James, and John may not know *how* Jesus will lead them, but since they know who Jesus really is, they will follow Him. Once they've seen His glory, they don't need to see more.

And this is true for us, too, especially now that the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is behind us. So what if you don't know how Jesus is going to make something glorious out of the mess that is your life. You've seen His glory! What more do you need? **All you need to do is listen to Jesus!**

It might sound crazy when He tells you to forgive that person who has wronged you. It might sound crazy when He tells you to lay down your life for others. It might sound crazy when He tells you give generously to the poor. It might sound crazy when He tells you to submit to a wicked government. It might sound crazy when He tells you to turn the other cheek. It might sound crazy when He tells you not to concern yourself with what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear. It might sound crazy to you when He tells you that the way to happiness is the way of holiness. It might sound crazy to you when He promises that His gospel will triumph over the gates of Hell, and that one day the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of His glory.

The way of Jesus includes a great deal that sounds crazy, and the fulfillment of many of His promises remains to be seen. But what *have* you seen? You've seen His glory! Through the preaching of His Word, Jesus Christ has been revealed to you as the glorious Son of heaven, God's Chosen One. Listen to Him, trust in Him, follow Him, and worship Him.

- *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*