

*<sup>1</sup>Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James; and he led them up onto a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>There he was transfigured in front of them. His face was shining like the sun. His clothing became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup>Just then, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus.*

*<sup>4</sup>Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, I will make three shelters here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”*

*<sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them. Just then, a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.”*

*<sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell face down and were terrified. <sup>7</sup>Jesus approached and as he touched them, he said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” <sup>8</sup>When they opened their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus alone. <sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”*

Put yourself in Peter’s shoes for a few minutes. Jesus invites you, James, and John for a hike up to the top of a nearby mountain. He wants to keep it private and quiet. Jesus invites you especially, because not long before this, when Jesus said he was going to suffer and die, you pulled him aside and rebuked him. That was not ok, and Jesus is about to show you why it wasn’t ok. Understand, everything happening on the mountain is not for Jesus’ sake. What you and your two friends are about to experience will be for your sake.

Once you get to the top of the mountain, Jesus is transfigured. His face shines, his clothes turn white, and Moses and Elijah appear with him. Jesus’ appearance changes and you see him in a different light. And you are not just seeing Jesus with a good night of sleep or perfect lighting around him. This is Jesus showing a taste of his glorified state. Remember he had set aside with full use of his divine glory when he became human. Here, he’s showing a little peek at what’s been hiding all along. He does this to prove that he is not as fragile as you have been tempted to believe. Jesus is not the treasure to be guarded. He is in full control.

All of this is so much to take in. So, you get an idea in your head. You are never hesitant to say what you think, and you don’t hesitate here either: “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, I will make three shelters here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” You are excited. You want to hit pause and stay in the moment for as long as you can. With Jesus emblazoned with glory and Moses and Elijah, who could blame you?

It’s the right idea, but the wrong time. You are right to desire to be in the presence of Jesus’ full glory. You are right to be excited that you are united with these heroes of faith whose

example has molded you and whose writings (from Moses) have informed you of God's endurance with his people. But as was the case when you thought chewing Jesus out for claiming that his death was approaching, your understanding of God's will and plans has made you look like a fool. God's plan of salvation can't be suspended in time here. There is still too much that needs to be done. Because what happens if you don't come off this mountaintop? There will be no suffering for Jesus, no cross, and no resurrection. And if there is no resurrection for Jesus, there is no resurrection for you either.

God doesn't even let you get out your suggestion for three tents. He sends a cloud to overshadow everything on top of the mountain. And the voice of God the Father comes from that cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him." God is showing his power. He's flexing his muscles. He's making it clear to you that he is God and you are not.

In fear, you and the others fall face down to the ground. But Jesus comes over, tells you to get up, and things are back to what they were before. And I want you to think about how inconsistent you've been. Jesus' glory has caused such excitement. You want to set up camp on this mountain and bask in the rays of the Son of God for as long as you can. But in the next moment, the glory of God is too much for you. You want to hide. You lie down as if dead. How can the glory of Jesus do so much to encourage and so much to scare from moment to moment?

Step back out of Peter's shoes. Is what he's going through here all that different from your rollercoaster relationship with God? Sometimes you are so happy to be in his presence. Like David, you wrap yourself with joy in his teachings. Then, in the next moment, you're on the run from God, ducking him anytime he seems to get close. You don't dare open your Bible out of an anxiety you can't describe. Church attendance has a gap. Maybe you can't put any of it into words, but you feel uncomfortable thinking about your relationship with God.

It's no secret what makes you feel that way: sin. It's sin that gets us out over our skis like Peter, assuming that we are so zealous toward God that we know what's better than he does. And it's sin that makes us shrink up like a raisin and keep our distance from God. Yes, we want to bask in his glory until we find out that we are not fit to stand in his sight. Our sin keeps us from being truly comfortable and right with God. But the reason Peter, James, and John couldn't stay with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah was not because his glory was not meant for them. It was because his glory was not meant for them yet.

Down this mountain they have to go, accompanying regular, humble Jesus instead of shiny, glorious Jesus. But they have places to be and things to do. Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem. His full glory will not show again until he appears to the women and the rest of the disciples on Easter Sunday. That journey to cross and grave would not be to fine-tune his glory to make it

more palatable for sinners. Of course, that would diminish our Lord's perfection and splendor. Instead, his mission was to make sinners worthy to stand before him in joy and not in fear.

As we enter the Lenten season and follow Jesus on the last leg of his trip to the cross, remember what you've see on this mountain. Remember it when Jesus is betrayed by a friend. Remember it when the soldiers beat him and spit on him. Remember it when he cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and "It is finished!" Look to your glorious Savior, made glorious in your sight because he rescued you from sin, death, and hell. You do not have to be afraid to come to him in worship or prayer or even in study in the quietness of your home. Do not let Satan lie to you and tell you that you are unworthy. You are worthy because he made you worthy.

It's not just the sights of Jesus' transfiguration that catch our attention. It's also what we hear. God the Father says, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." This is the same thing the Father said at Jesus' baptism, all the way back at the beginning of his ministry. But now he adds more: "Listen to him." It's certainly a stamp of approval from the Father of everything the Son had been doing, but it's more than that. God is telling the disciples to listen because they haven't been. Peter had tried to veto Jesus. The disciples as a whole didn't think this suffering and death sounded like the right plan from their Messiah. So, God tells them to listen.

He tells us to listen too. And he tells us that because we too are not always so good at listening. It is easy to believe God's near when everything in your life is going as planned. But how about when it's not? How much do you trust God's plans to prosper you when your health is failing, when your family is crumbling, or even when the long, dark winter has you feeling blue? It's easy to trust that he cares for you in theory, but how about when you see people mistreated and abused, when the finances get tight, and when sin has dragged you kicking and screaming into its chains of slavery? This is not how it was supposed to go! God's plans should have been better!

"Listen." God tells us to shut our bitter mouths that want to run in anger or sadness or jealousy and just listen. What were Jesus' first words to the disciples as their faces were buried in the ground? He touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." Jesus deals with his people in gentleness. Because his purpose is not to whip us into shape like a drill sergeant and make us ready to be pleasing to God. He's calling us to trust that he has done that for us.

As the men got up from their fearful posture, they looked around. And what did they see? Jesus. Only Jesus. Their leader. The one they are to listen to. Down the mountain they go, with only one instruction to follow: "Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." This was for them. For their comfort. For their trust. So that they would keep listening even when Jesus' words got hard to hear.

Jesus comes to you with the same message: don't be afraid! Christ is working on your behalf in every situation. And his promises are certain. He will be with you in every trial. Keep on listening to his word, finding the peace that only comes because our God came to conquer the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh for us. And as we enter this Lenten season of the church year, your opportunities increase to hear your Savior's voice in worship twice a week. When terror and sadness come, don't hide from God. Come see your glorious Savior. And don't just see him in his glory. Hear his words of comfort: "Do not be afraid." He has won for you heaven, and if he has done that, do you really believe he'll forget about the smaller stuff? Of course not. Amen.