

Devotion on the Miracles of Christ (Transfiguration) – 20 March 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, **Arise, and be not afraid.** 8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. 9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, **Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.** 10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.** 12 **But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.** 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. (Matt 17:1-13)

We have presented to us in today's text the full glory and Person of Christ, and that which distinguishes Him from all others including the great prophets. Appropriately so, we glimpse the glorified Christ on the high mountain to which He oft resorted to pray and be in fellowship with His Father, and OUR Father. One fine point of the mountaintop Communion was so that the company of disciples could be 'apart' from any worldly concerns and be alone with Christ and those others who appeared in miraculous splendor with Him. It was a teaching and learning moment for the disciples and, in this case, the teaching came not only from the lips of Christ, but from the Father as well. What a blessed confirmation of the Triunity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost are presented in this exalted experience! The entire event reminds us of the Evidence of the

Triune God throughout every feature of the physical Universe – in Time, in Space, in Matter, and most brilliantly, in Man. Christ is the great 'I AM' and the Ancient of Days – existing from eternity past to eternity future, but most markedly, in the eternal Present. He is Emmanuel – God With US! That means ALWAYS with us! He was with us at the Creation (John 1:1-3) and He will be with us at the close of all time (Rev 22). Though He was with us in a physical body during His earthly ministry, He exists in a glorified body which we shall see and know at our future calling.

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” A parallel account of this event is recorded in Luke 9:28-36. Luke adds some detail not included in the present text. *“And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.”* (Luke 9:29) Note that His prayer was answered **AS** He prayed – not **after**. The nature of His physical being was starkly changed into a glorious appearance. This is a reminder to us of the glorious life we shall have following our cross on earth. Nathaniel Hawthorne compares Christianity to a “grand cathedral with divinely pictured windows. Viewed from without, it is impossible to gain the slightest conception of the beautiful forms and radiant colors manifest to those who look at them from within.” So it is with Christ. There is a glory in Him not visible to those without, but revealed to those who dwell in His Heart of Hearts.

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.” We find that the Law (in Moses), the prophets (in Elias), and the Gospels (in Christ) are all represented at this moment on the Mount. There is no profusion of light and brightness from Elias and Moses for neither the Law, nor the Prophets, can save. It is Christ who is the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets that is the giver of Light and Grace. The harmony of the law, prophets, and Gospel was made manifest by this scene. They were all parts of one whole, as trunk, limbs, flowers, and fruit are all parts of one tree. Here were representatives of the “whole family in heaven and earth.” Thus Christians are nearest together in doctrine when nearest to Christ in heavenly experience. The best Christians differ least in essentials. The churches become one on the Mount of Transfiguration. The differences in the light of our own little lamps are all absorbed in the radiance of the sun. So it is in our transfiguration experiences with Christ; the difficulties of the great doctrines of grace vanish, and all become harmonious; and Christians, who rejoice in these lofty experiences together, though of many different denominations, yet become one in Jesus Christ.

“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” The body of Christ cannot be divided against itself. There is one Body, and one Church. We do not build houses of worship to men, but to God. Peter is careless in his eagerness. In the emotion of the hour, Peter wants to build THREE tabernacles. He misses the point of Christ altogether. Even some good men are deceived by emotion to build a church on a great man and not a great God.

“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” The moment was so profound that God considered it expedient to witness of His only Begotten Son Himself. He came down in His majesty as He had done on Mt. Sinai. He will not allow His Son to be slighted by the desire to honor men! He spoke with His own Voice a most deliberate and Holy counsel that His Son was His beloved and the disciples must now hear only Him!

“And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”

So abject was their amazement at what they had witnessed that they were terrified. The power of the moment was too much for mortals. *“And Jesus came and touched them, and said, **Arise, and be not afraid.** And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”* God had made an important point regarding His son. It was He alone who was the Incarnate Son. We cannot be saved or live Holy lives apart from Christ alone!

“And as they came down from the mountain” The Mountain was not the permanent place for the disciples. They were to go down into the sinful world carrying their heavenly experience with them to sustain and carry them in difficult times ahead.

“Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” In the economy of heaven, there is a time and place for everything. God often confides to His people certain knowledge that cannot be endured by the world until the time of the Lord’s choosing. This was definitely such a time, for Christ MUST endure the passion of the Cross if we are to enjoy the benefits of heaven.

*“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. but I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.** Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”* The prophets of old time were murdered by the Jews, and so was the latter Elias – John the Baptist. But the greatest event that has ever occurred for our benefit was that Christ died for us – the righteous for the unrighteous. The mysteries of His Purpose and Will must have been kept silent until the act was completed to our comfort and great joy.

Have you seen the Christ of the Transfiguration? Has His resplendent form of light and glory penetrated your dull eyes and your hard heart? If so, happy are you!