

Transfiguration Sunday Sermon

Introduction:

Today as we go through our “through the life of Jesus: Matthew Edition” sermon series we come to Matthew 17 the Transfiguration. Now it’s not by accident that we are looking at the Transfiguration today because Next week is Lent and for hundreds of years Christians all over the world have studied the Transfiguration the Sunday before Lent.

Now for some people Lent may be kind of a foreign concept and for others it’s a practice you may be very familiar with it might be something you love and cherish or something that seems meaningless or silly. It may be associated with Roman Catholicism or Lutheranism but Lent is not a Catholic practice or a Lutheran thing it is a deeply Christian practice. Irenaeus one of the earliest Christian Scholars wrote in the second century about people practicing a time of prayer and fasting in preparation for Easter. Through the years the way its practiced has changed in the beginning it was only a few days long but during those few days people spent a lot of time praying and fasted the whole three to five days.

By the late 300s a 40 day period of prayer and fasting ending on Maundy Thursday in preparation for Easter was firmly established. Since then it has been practiced by the millions of Christians all over the world including Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox and the majority of protestant and evangelical churches. Probably the most well know part of lent is giving something up. Now in the beginning this was always food and the fasts were pretty intense. People would fast all forty days except for Sundays with only a small meal at night including no cheese, or milk, or meat. Over time a second meal was allowed if you had a physically demanding job, then fish was allowed, then meat was only not allowed on Friday, now people mostly don't eat meat on Friday except for fish and give up something like chocolate or Netflix.

I think if Christians from 400 AD could see our Lent now they would think we had become pretty soft.

And fairly soon after Lent was established people started studying the Transfiguration the Sunday before the start of Lent.

And as we look at Matthew chapter 17 today we are going to be asking two questions why did the transfiguration happen at this specific time and why is it relevant for me and my relationship with Jesus today and especially as we move into the season of Lent.

Lets pray and then dive into the text...

Read the word: Matthew 17:1

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

Paint the Picture:

- What's the first question we should ask when we see a verse like this?
 - Peter's confession
 - Jesus Predicts his death and resurrection
 - Jesus tells them to take up their cross and follow him
 - Promise that some will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom
 - 8 days vs. 6 days
- So Jesus takes Peter, James, and John
- And go up to a high mountain
 - We don't know where
- Must be something significant

Ask the questions:

- Why does Jesus choose to bring Peter, James, and John
 - John Chrysostom
 - Peter is recognized for his love for Jesus

- John is recognized for Jesus' love for Him
- James would be the first apostle to be killed for the faith

Transition:

In the next verses we will see that Jesus brought Peter, James, and John up to the mountain because he is going to peel back the layers of Creation and reveal the glory of the heavenly realm. And he will do this in three layers.

Read the Word: Matthew 17:2

2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Paint the Picture:

- First layer
- Jesus takes them up to this high mountain and he is *metamorphthe* to change form.
- His face shone like the sun
- His clothes were dazzling white
 - Mark: whiter than anyone could bleach
- What must Peter James and John been thinking?

Ask the questions:

- What does this reveal to us about Jesus?
 - Rev. 1:16 “12 Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. 14 His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like

burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

- Common lie told by offshoots of Christianity

Transition:

As amazing as this must have been we will see this was only the first layer...

Read the Word: Matthew 17:3-4

3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I[a] will make three dwellings[b] here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Paint the Picture:

- 2nd layer
- Suddenly Moses and Elijah Appear
 - Not looking at the disciples
 - Focused on Jesus
 - Not just looking but talking with
 - Reminds me of the garden of Eden
- Peter Speaks
 - Mark: frightened
 - Luke: babbling

Ask the questions:

- Why Moses and Elijah
 - Law and the Prophets
 - People said about Jesus and accusations brought against Jesus

- Both had encounters with God but they couldn't directly see him
 - Moses: back as he was passing
 - Elijah wrapped in cloth
 - Their hope being realized

Transition:

In the middle Jesus standing there in all his divine glory, and Moses and Elijah speaking face to face with God, and Peter being Peter something happens that brings these three disciples to their knees.

Read the word: Matthew 17:5-8

5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved;[c] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” 8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Paint the Picture:

- Peter Interrupted when Jesus pulls back the third layer
- A replay of what happened at Jesus Baptism but in more splendor
 - Holy Spirit in the form of a cloud
 - God The Father speaking with the addition of listen to Him
 - God the Son standing there between Moses and Elijah radiating his glory
- When the disciples see this they are so overcome with the glory and presence of God that they fall to ground in terror
 - Human weakness is not strong enough to bear the sight of such great glory but trembles with its whole heart and body and falls to earth “And Jesus came up and touched them.” Because

they were lying down and could not rise, he mercifully came up and touched them so that through his touch he might put to flight their fear and strengthen their weakened limbs. Jerome

- And as they open their eyes they are alone again with Jesus

Conclusion:

Its hard to imagine what it would have been like to be Peter, James, and John as they witnessed the glory of God being revealed but we know that this made such an impression on Peter that he wrote in 2nd Peter...

13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body,[h] to refresh your memory, 14 since I know that my death[i] will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved,[j] with whom I am well pleased.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

Why did Jesus do this? Why now at this point in time did he reveal this to

Peter James and John?

- The answer is found in the Gospels
 - Up to this point Matthew has centered his account around Jesus ministry near Galilee
 - Now the geographical center of his account will be Jerusalem
 - Jesus will move ever close to his death
- In Matthew Mark and Luke the transfiguration is prefaced by
 - Peter's confession
 - The prediction of Christ's death and resurrection
 - And the command to take up their cross and follow Him.
 - He promised them that some would not taste death until they see the son of man coming in his kingdom
 - He showed it to them
 - Now they need to take up their crosses because the Death of Jesus is coming soon
- Cling to this memory
 - When the reality of God's glory was revealed.

- Each one of them would suffer for Christ

Why is the transfiguration important for our relationship with Jesus today
and especially before the season of Lent?

- I want to invite all of you to follow in the footsteps of Jesus
- Follow in the footsteps of the apostles
- The millions of Christians who have come before us
- And the millions of Christians today
- Willingly take up a cross and follow and make a sacrifice during lent.
 - But not because it is a great tradition
 - Not because it builds perseverance and discipline or improves health
 - Sacrifice a physical comfort because when we peel back the layers of carnal comfort that surround us we are forced to find comfort in the glory, power, and love of Jesus.
- Obviously this is not something you have to do but its something I want to invite you to do.
- Give up warm showers or sweets or social media

- But be specific be safe and choose something that will cause discomfort
 - Too often we rely on the physical comforts of this world
 - This Lent I invite you to willingly give up some physical comfort so that you will be ever reminded to rely on the power and love of Jesus.