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The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord  
2 March 2014  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Exod 24:8-18; 2 Pet 1:16-21; Mt 17:1-9

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

I imagine it was spectacular.

On the mountain,

having been covered in the blood of the covenant,

with Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the rest of the elders:

*“they saw the God of Israel!”* (Exod 24:10)

And better yet, they didn't die!

Instead, came the invitation to eat and drink.

It was pure delight—a taste of heaven; who'd want to leave?

Similarly, I expect it was one of those unforgettable moments for Peter, James, and John.

They also went up a high mountain.

They also saw God.

And better yet, they also didn't die!

We're not told whether they had time to eat and drink like the elders of old,

but we do hear of a conversation: Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Mt 17:3)

But then came another voice—one they've heard before:

*“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”* (17:5)

That's the same voice and the same words that pierced the sky at His baptism.

And besides that, there was something familiar about the voice—

almost like that was the voice they'd heard as they gathered around the Scriptures.

*It was.*

And that's the point of the Transfiguration.

We're not given this day in the Church year so that we could covet their mountaintop experience.

The point isn't the dazzlingly bright light or the sapphire pavement.

It's the Word.

Why is it that Moses and the elders went up the mountainside long ago?

It wasn't for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, or for the rich food.

*“The Lord said to Moses,*

*‘Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there,*

*that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment,*

*which I have written for their instruction.’”* (Exod 24:12)

The tablets of stone are the word of God!

They went up Sinai not to *experience* God for a fleeting moment,

but to have His presence with them *forever*.

So it was for the Transfiguration also.

They weren't there to see the whitest robes or a magically glowing face—  
they were there in order to hear: *listen to Him*.

Moses gave us the Law, Elijah stands as the voice of the Prophets—  
and together they speak of Jesus.

Now, we know the Transfiguration is all about the Word because Peter says so.

Listen to his account:

*“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 were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

*For when He received honor and glory from God the Father,  
and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory,*

*‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’  
we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven,  
for we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

*And we have something more sure, the prophetic word,*

*to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,  
until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,  
knowing this first of all,*

*that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*

*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man,*

*but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

(2 Peter 1:16-21)

You see what he did there?

He was at the Transfiguration.

He saw God face to face (and didn't die!).

He experienced a vision; He saw with his own eyes Moses and Elijah.

He heard the booming voice of the Father!

But St. Peter knows: feelings sometimes lie.

The ecstatic joy, the terrible fear, whatever the experience: we need something more sure.

We've also had times where we feel like we've 'experienced' God, or felt Him, or heard Him.

Then again, we've also felt total confusion and fear and doubt and despair.

Where's God when you don't *feel* Him?

Where is He when you can't see the brightness of His face—and, in fact, everything looks dark?

As St. Peter says, “*we have something more sure: the prophetic word*”! (1:19)

That is, we have the Scriptures: Old and New Testaments—both witnesses of who God is *for us*!

So it's fitting that when the terrified disciples fell on their faces with fear,

*“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.”* (Mt 17:7-8)

That's what the Word is all about: *Jesus only*.  
 The Old Testament isn't a list of instructions; and the New Testament isn't a shorter list.  
 The Bible *isn't* basic instructions before leaving earth.

The Scriptures witness Christ.  
 They testify of who He is for us.  
 They proclaim our sin and God's grace.  
 And best of all: they deliver Jesus only.

Our certainty isn't founded on our experiences or our visions or our feelings.  
 Our certainty rests in what God has said.

So what has God said of you?  
 "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."  
 "I forgive you all your sins."  
 "Take eat; drink of it all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood,  
     which is shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins."

You don't have a mountain you need to climb.  
 You don't need to place your hands into His side, or your fingers through the holes in His hands.  
 You don't need to have an experience or a feeling—  
     Satan can give you all the feelings you'd ever want!

What you need is what you have: the Word of God.  
 You have Jesus only.  
 Listen to Him.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*