

## **“The Glorious Exodus of God’s Chosen One”**

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 17:1–9; Luke 9:28-36; and Mark 9:2-9 (The Transfiguration)

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*Dearly beloved of God, this morning’s sermon is taken from our Gospel lesson. Let us pray...*

*O Heavenly Father, it is good to be here before You, in Your very presence, at the prompting of Your Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is good that we are here, waiting on You, to speak to us through Your Word. It is good to be here for it is here, by the means that You have ordained, that our eyes, by faith, may see Your Son’s glory. We are here to hear, see, and know Jesus; we are here to listen to Him, Your Chosen One, O Heavenly Father. Guard, therefore, our hearts and minds as we come into Your holy presence. Amen.*

Dearly beloved in the Lord, in the words of St. Peter, it is good to be here as we consider the Transfiguration of our Lord this day. Indeed, St. Peter was quite right when he said, “It is good that we are here.” After all, at that time, unlike any time until that time, it was a time like no other as there, on Mt. Tabor, the veil between this world and the world beyond it was pulled back in front of St. Peter so as to reveal Jesus in the radiant glory of His divine nature. It was good for there too St. Peter, St. John, and St. James saw Moses and Elijah talking to their Master. It was good for them to behold the majestic cloud of God’s presence and hear the voice of God the Father. Yet, the Transfiguration of our Lord wasn’t just about the supernatural elements surrounding the event itself, as being just a glimpse of the truth about *who* Jesus is, but it was also about the work that was to follow, the work that Jesus had come to do. It was good for the disciples of that day to be there and for us, as Jesus’ disciples today, to be here to hear of

it because it was all about the work of Jesus on the cross that awaited Him as He worked His way toward the holy city of Jerusalem, in accord with His holy mission. So, therefore, the good purpose of the Transfiguration was to serve as a lesson for Jesus' disciples to learn to see Him in a whole new light. It is a lesson about the glory of God's Christ— both His person and His work. It is the lesson that in our midst is not a God of glory who is far away, but a God who is with us, at work among us, leading us in safety into His glorious presence, secure in His promises to His people.

The presence of Moses and Elijah help us to understand this better. For, you see, they were there with Jesus for a reason. Their presence, as you may recall, is recorded for us in all three of the synoptic gospels. All three— St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke— tell us that the three of them (that is, Moses, Elijah, and our Lord) weren't just standing there for the sole sake of beaming forth that resplendent glory which bedazzled the disciples who beheld this alien sight, but they were *talking* to each other. What were they discussing? Well, brothers and sisters, we don't need to fully fall into speculation because, while St. Matthew and St. Mark are silent, St. Luke informs us that Moses and Elijah were talking to our Lord, Jesus Christ, about the work that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. They spoke of His "departure"— or, as it reads in the original Greek, they spoke about His "exodus". Yes, they spoke about His "exodus". Now, of course, when it comes to the subject of "exodus", well, that's certainly something that Moses was most familiar with since it was Moses who led the people of Israel in *their* exodus out of the land of Egypt, as they were rescued from their time of hardship and bondage. Indeed, this exodus was such a monumental event in the lives of God's people that it was rightly understood as the defining moment in their nation's history. Still, as great as Moses,

whom the LORD knew face-to-face, was, he ultimately could not finish the task of leading the people into the Promised Land. No, that task was give to another. This work was entrusted to Joshua, the son of Nun. He brought them to cross the waters of the Jordan river to the freedom that lay just beyond its banks in the land that they would finally occupy. Yet, as great as this exodus from slavery to liberty may have been, it wouldn't last. The people eventually fell into bondage again— to the Assyrians, to the Babylonians, to the Greeks, and to the Romans. Now, however, another exodus was being discussed. A far greater exodus. A permanent and lasting exodus. Indeed, it was about an exodus from that which enslaves every slave and slave-master. It was all about Jesus' exodus and where He would lead us! This is what Moses and Jesus were discussing that day— this final and greater exodus by the One who is far greater than Moses, the One who alone has truly seen the Father because He alone is from God and fully God. Moses discussed this greater exodus with the greater Prophet about which he had prophesied and we now follow. They spoke about an exodus that was not just from the powers of this world, but from the power of sin and death. They spoke about the exodus that would part the way of that barrier that parts us from God and one another. They spoke about the exodus that would take place with Jesus' own supernaturally sacrificial death on our part, for the sake of securing our fullest freedom.

Now, of course, when it came to the subject of sacrifice, well, that's certainly something that the prophet Elijah was most familiar with since it was Elijah who stood alone in a supernatural contest of sacrifices, against the prophets of Baal. Indeed, it was Elijah alone who prayed for God to accept the sacrifice he offered. It was Elijah alone who interceded for an adulterous and idolatrous nation as the fire of God came down and consumed his sacrifice, the

altar it was on, and the ground all around it. The fire of God that should have consumed the rebellious and sinful people consumed instead the sacrifice which the prophet had boldly offered in faith, trusting that God would reveal His glory. Indeed, it was a picture of the sacrifice that Jesus Himself would make on the altar of the cross. For it was Jesus who hung alone on the cross, offering Himself for the sins of the world. It was Jesus alone who interceded for an adulterous and idolatrous world, offering His life in our place, taking the fiery blast of God's wrath that we deserve, and being Himself consumed by its flames in our stead. This is what Elijah and Jesus were discussing that day— this final sacrifice for the sins of all people.

So, dear brethren, our lesson today lets us in on that conversation which would tell of Jesus' work for our sake. Indeed, therein is a lesson for not only Peter, James, and John, but for our sake as well. This conversation was for our sake, for by it we know that what Moses' exodus fell short of finishing on the top of Mt. Sinai, or Mt. Nebo, and what Elijah's sacrifice pictured on the top of Mt. Carmel would now be accomplished once and for all by Jesus; however, it would not be accomplished by His glorious Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, but by His suffering on Mt. Calvary. That is why the voice of the Father from the cloud, that day, says to us what it said to the disciples: "Listen to Him!" For the glory is not in what you see, but in what you hear. Not in the vision, but in the Word. It is the testimony that Jesus' glory is greater than Moses' and Elijah's— not because of the Transfiguration, but because of the cross! His glory is greater because of the work that He would do— that work which none other could ever do! God's Chosen One would set aside His glory to lay down His life for the life of the world. God's Chosen One would lay down His life to forgive our sin and by His death defeat death. God's Chosen One would lay down His life so that on the cross we should see God in a whole

new light— seeing His love, His strength, and His true glory. He would do this to reveal that the God of the cross is God at work to save us from our sins.

Beloved in the Lord, just as in Moses' day, we too, today, are threatened by sin. It's the sinfulness of the world around us that brings heartache and pain within us. It's the sin in creation that brings disease and disaster. It's the sin still in us that we cannot tame, no matter how hard we try, that keeps working to enslave us. Just as in Elijah's day, there are still, today, false gods and false prophets that promise us everything we need and want, if only we follow them, if only we do what they say— for then we will be happy, then we will be victorious, then we'll have the kind of lives about which we've always wished. Yet, we know better. Thank God, for we know that doesn't work. Our sin is too strong to overcome on our own and the false promises of false gods and false prophets are just that, false. They promise life where there is only death. They promise happiness that only ends in sorrow. They promise to satisfy our longings, yet only leave us longing for more. They promise a glory that ultimately fades before it even truly shines. No, there is only One who can free us from sin's shackles. There is only One who does not demand our lives, but gives us His own instead. There is only One who does not wait for us to pull ourselves up and go to Him, but who came down for us and continues to come to us. There is only One who promises to rescue and deliver us out of the darkness, for He is the Light of the world. It is His light that shines before us as He leads us out by the way of His cross. There is only One. "Listen to Him!"

God's Chosen One is the only One. He is greater than Moses and Elijah. He is greater than you and me. He is greater than sin, death and any devil. He is the One who leads us in our exodus, through the waters, not of the Red Sea, but the waters of Holy Baptism, and not into the

Promised Land of Canaan, but the Promised Land of His Presence. There is only One. There is only One Who hung on the cross in your place and who died your death so that because He was raised to life you too would be raised from death to life. The sacrifice is complete. The exodus is complete. The glory complete.

The glory that was revealed in His Transfiguration was always His own. The work that He came to do and for which He had to set aside His glory, however, was always for you and you alone. The lesson of His Transfiguration lets you see your Saviour in this light by speaking of His mission to save you and ultimately glorify you in His own glory, just as His servants Moses and Elijah. Yet, though you may not behold this glory today, there still remains the promise which will be fulfilled tomorrow. What is now hidden will surely be revealed. The Father calls us not to see, but to listen, to listen with ears of faith so as to see with eyes of faith. The Father calls us to listen to His Word of promise, His Word of truth, His Word of life. He calls us to listen to the Word made flesh, His Chosen One, Jesus Christ. So, as we now leave the glory of Epiphany to enter the season of Lent, let us attentively listen to Jesus as we lift our eyes towards His cross—the cross by which He draws us to Himself as by His supernaturally sacrificial exodus He brings about our own. Surely, it is good to be here for the message of His cross speaks of His finished work. It is good to be here because it is here that we hear that He has given Himself for us, for our salvation. Alleluia and amen!

*Now may God's gracious Word of promise keep our hearts and minds at peace in Christ Jesus.  
**Amen.***