

Lord, bring us to that mountain where we can see Your glory shine. Let us follow You to the glory of Your cross to celebrate Your power and to marvel at Your life given for us. Amen. (The Lutheran Study Bible, CPH, 2009, p. 1676)

[A]fter six days **Jesus** took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And He **was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.** And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking when, and **behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."** When the disciples heard this, **they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.** And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

In Christ Jesus, who bids us rise and have no fear in His gracious presence no matter the circumstances in life, dear fellow redeemed:

Adam and Eve, after falling into sin, tried to hide from God. They were afraid. The terror of falling into the hands of our just living God fully exposed in our sin grips our hearts too. But there is no place any of us can hide without being found by the all-knowing and all-seeing God Almighty. Peter, James and John were in such a situation when they ascended the mountain with Jesus and a bright cloud overshadowed them and the Father's voice from the cloud spoke. We are told **"they fell on their faces and were terrified. But 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."**

Jesus gave these three disciples this special experience no doubt in preparation for their selective witnessing Him soon at the lowest point in His humiliation. In great anguish He prayed to His Father with bloody sweat pouring from His face. So we need to prepare ourselves for entering upon the season of our Lord's passion and death with the truth from this experience and conclude for ourselves: **We Have No Terror of God Almighty - We See Him in Jesus Only.**

I

When is the last time you tried hiding from God? You may snicker at that, but whenever you have tried to hide your deeds and

words from your neighbor, yes, even your thoughts by putting on a fake smile, you thought you were hiding it from God Himself. Of course, if you were asked in a spot quiz: *"Can you hide from the all-knowing and all-seeing Lord?"* you would answer correctly. But so would King David have answered correctly after he took the expecting Bathsheba in as his wife for almost an entire year after his sins of adultery with her and murder of her husband in order to hide his sin. It was only when God through the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sins did he finally confess.

We do not know what was going on in the mind of that paralyzed man when his friends lowered him down through the roof before Jesus. Perhaps he had heard of this great prophet of God who performed miracles, but was concerned that instead of healing he would be reprimanded for his sin. We could suspect this, since Jesus' first words to him were: "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." Was this man struck with terror of conscience with the prospect of lying exposed before God? But, in seeing Jesus and hearing those sweet liberating words from Him, terror melted away.

This is actually nothing new with Jesus, the Son of God. Our Savior came with the same spirit and truth, which the Father had always shown to the human race. The Old Testament prophet Micah speaks of this at the close of his prophecy: "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as You have sworn to our fathers from the days of old."

When our dear Jesus is out of our sight as He was in that enveloping bright cloud for these three disciples, terror seizes the heart of the sinner. You are no different. The theme for our students in school this year, is the expression spoken during holy week by some Grecian Jews: "We would see Jesus." We want the heavenly Father also to see Jesus, our perfect Substitute, who answered for all our sins and dresses us in His holiness. So we pray in Jesus' name when we call upon the Father, whether using those very words or simply coming as a contrite believer trusting in the Lord Jesus.

II

We want the Father to behold Jesus based on His words in that bright cloud: "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." If the Father is pleased in the One He sent to

be your Substitute, you can know and trust that the Father looks upon you and says: *"I am well pleased with you."*

Curiously Jesus tells these three disciples after their mountaintop experience, not only in the presence of Jesus, and the voice of the Father speaking to them, and their time also with the two great prophets – Moses and Elijah, to keep this all to themselves. How they probably wanted to share it with the other nine disciples, but Jesus told them not to speak of it until after His resurrection. (One wonders if Matthew, the inspired writer of this account, asked the three on Easter: "Why did you not tell us sooner?")

We can only speculate why Jesus would ask them to keep this confidential until after Easter. It is probably similar to why Jesus did not want His followers, even those who were actually healed, to speak of many of His miracles. Jesus knew that the hatred of His enemies would only be intensified the more His popularity would increase. Look at what happened to the man born blind. He was excommunicated by the unbelieving religious leaders because he refused to condemn his Healer, Jesus. But when the time was right, the last straw that pushed these enemies to seek Jesus' execution was the raising of Lazarus shortly before Palm Sunday and holy week.

So, this magnificent experience at Jesus' transfiguration, was to confirm the glorious exaltation at Jesus' resurrection. Can you imagine the conflict between this experience and Jesus' trial before the High Priest? They were polar opposite concepts in Peter's mind. Peter, trusting in his own strength, fell miserably. As much as he treasured this mountain top experience, his own strength could not resist the temptation to deny his Lord before Jesus' enemies. When Jesus looked at him after his third denial, did he recall this episode?

We heard Peter in our Epistle lesson recounting the transfiguration of our Lord calling upon his readers, like you, to be confirmed in the prophetic Word of God as a lamp shining in a dark place. Jesus reaches out to you in that Word found even in the Sacraments. It is here that you behold your loving Lord God, not in His bare majesty, but as your brother in the flesh, Jesus. Your sins are all forgiven. You have life abiding in you through faith in Him.

So much did Peter desire that the initial experience with Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah would continue, he offered to build three shelters for them. Yes, Jesus was already transfigured in His divine glory. Luke tells us that Jesus' clothing became dazzling white. But that did not terrorize Peter, it was not until Jesus vanished in the bright cloud and the thundering voice spoke that terror struck.

You are expecting to see Jesus at His return. This will not frighten you, surprise you, yes, because it will happen at a time unexpected, but you will not be terrorized. In heaven before the throne of God you again will not be filled with fear because always in the middle of the throne you will see Jesus, as the Lamb who has been slain for you. This image will be of eternal comfort since the Father will always behold the price that was paid in full for all your sin and deserved death.

You are blessed. You come here to see Jesus only. His Word of grace and mercy, the gracious water of life, the precious food of His holy body and blood remove all terror. God is pleased with your Substitute, so He is pleased with you. Be at peace forevermore. Amen.