

**The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.”**

<sup>15</sup> **When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it,** <sup>16</sup> **and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.** <sup>17</sup> **To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.** <sup>18</sup> **Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.** (NIV84)

Theme: Without Christ, you can't see him and Live.

When you were young your Mom probably warned you not to stare at the sun. And for good reason. Doing so would damage your eyes. If you stare at the sun for too long you could burn your retinas which would result in losing your sight. Your eyes simply can't handle the sun's power and brightness.

The same can be said about the Almighty God. He is so great and so glorious that we can't look at him in our sinfulness and live. And yet, through his Son we will see in him in his full glory as we live with him in heaven forever.

It didn't look good to the Israelites. The people were standing on the base of Mount Sinai. Their leader, Moses, was called to the top of the Mountain by God. He had been up there for quite some time. He was talking to God alone. So no one else was allowed to come. For over 40 days and 40 nights he was gone. They might have wondered what happened to him. Was he still alive?

All they could see was a dark cloud. Perhaps it looked like smoke. Moses said to the people it looked **like a consuming fire**. It was the Glory of the Lord. A visible manifestation of God. This darkness covered the top of the mountain. It was a thick darkness we were told earlier.

Moses went up there to get the Ten Commandments. They were given by God earlier. He would chisel their words onto stone with his

finger. And he put them onto two tablets. One for him and one for the people. Both sides had a copy of this two sided covenant, or agreement. It was a simple agreement. If the people obeyed his commands, God would bless them. But if they refused to obey him, then they would be punished. And not given just any sort of punishment. But eternal damnation with the devil forever. After the 40 days were over, Moses went down from the mountain. He hadn't been gone for that long, but the people weren't sure what happened to him. They could see the dark cloud of the glory of the Lord on the top of the mountain. But they rejected God. They asked Aaron to make them a god. So he took all of their gold and melted it down to form a golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain he could see the people bowing down and worshiping this inanimate idol. It hadn't even been that long, and yet the people had already rejected God and gone after false gods. They broke the first commandment blatantly—not long after they heard this very commandment from God himself. All they had to do was look at the top of the mountain and they could see a dark cloud—a visible manifestation of the Lord. He was right there, yet they decided to worship an idol.

The Israelites couldn't help but sin. And the same stands for us. We try and we try, but we sin all the time. Each and every day we fail to obey God's commands. We rebel against him more often than we can count. Like the Israelites we too break the first commandment. Sure, I doubt that any of us bow down and worship a golden calf. But we place other things in our lives as more important than God. Family, friends, our job, money, hobbies, and so on—from time to time we make them ahead of God in our lives. We turn them into gods. Like every other human, Moses too, was a sinner. That's why he couldn't see God in his full glory. Sure Moses and the Elders, right before our text, got a glimpse of God. But it seems as if they saw nothing more than his feet—or perhaps just below his feet. And when Moses asked to see God's face later on, God told him no. He said, **you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live**. Moses was only allowed to see God's back as he passed by. No one would be able to survive anything more than that.

Why? We are sinners. God is so holy and perfect that we cannot look at him in our sinfulness and live. He is so glorious and we are so lowly that we can't lay our eyes upon him. We wouldn't be able to handle it. It's like trying to look into the sun—but much worse. Our pupils can't handle looking into the sun. But to a much greater extent we can't look at the Son of God and live. He is too great for us. That is why God had to hide himself in the dark cloud on the top of Mount Sinai. Moses couldn't see him in his full glory. The people were afraid of the dark cloud. They couldn't handle God's voice—it was too great for them. So in a dark, thick cloud—like a consuming fire, Moses talked to God.

How different was the Glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai than on the Mount of Transfiguration! The same divine glory that so frightened the people at Mount Sinai was hidden in the flesh of Jesus Christ. True man. And yet he remained true God. But hidden. You couldn't tell simply by looking at him. He was born like everyone else. He had to learn how to walk, talk, and feed himself. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. He grew in wisdom and stature. He was just like you and me. And yet in Christ was hidden his divine glory. We would get glimpses every once in awhile. His miracles come to mind. They prove that he has the power of God, and is God himself. He also taught with authority—unlike any other. At his baptism the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came and landed on him. Then the Father spoke from heaven, **This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.** Something similar happened toward the end of Jesus' ministry. He took three of his disciples on top of a mountain. And there he transfigured before them. His face shined like the sun. And his clothes became bright white. Moses and Elijah came to talk to him. And the Father said almost the exact same words that he said at Jesus' baptism, **This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!**

The disciples heard, but they couldn't see. It was too bright for them. Their eyes couldn't handle it. Jesus was too glorious for them to handle. They were too sinful to look at Christ. It was just a glimpse of his divine glory. But even that glimpse proved to be too much for them. And they were afraid—because they were sinners before their holy God. So Jesus came to them, touched them, and assured them.

**Do not be afraid**, he said to his disciples. They had nothing to worry about. They had seen the glory of the Lord and lived. And think of Moses. Before he couldn't see God and live. God had to hide himself in a cloud. Or he was only allowed to see his back as he passed by. But now he stood before the Lord. And talked to him. No longer afraid.

Moses isn't the only contrast we notice between Mount Sinai and the Mount of Transfiguration. On Mount Sinai God gave a covenant we could never keep. No wonder the glory of the Lord was dark and scary. It looked like the consuming fire that we all deserve for our sins. That dark cloud is a good picture of what was given at that time. Given was the law that condemns us, that leads to death. But then there is the bright light of Jesus's glory. Not hiding himself from sinners in a dark cloud. But revealing himself in his divine glory. Not in a dark consuming fire, but with bright and glorious radiance. Pure white, because he is pure and holy. And he will make us the same. After his transfiguration, Jesus set his sight on Jerusalem. He traveled there knowing that he would suffer and die for us. So on Wednesday, as we begin the season of Lent, we do the same. For through his suffering and death he would make us righteous. He would take our sins upon himself. He would suffer for what we have done wrong. He would die for our sins. We constantly sin and fail to obey even God's first command. Yet Jesus kept that command for us—and all others. And so he gave us his perfect life.

And Jesus promises to come again in his full glory. All the world will see him and bow down and confess him as our Lord and Savior. And all those who believe in him will be taken up to live with him in heaven forever. And there in heaven we will see Jesus in his full divine glory. And John says in his first epistle, **he shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.** On this earth we can't see Jesus as he is. We can't because he is perfect and holy and we are low miserable sinners. But Jesus made us like him. He took away our sins and made us perfect and holy in his sight. So without sin and now with Christ's perfection we can see him. In his full divine glory. And we will see him forever. For he will be our light as live next to him and sing his praises in to eternity.

You can't look at the sun for too long. Your eyes can't handle it. In the same way on earth, you can't see God in his full glory and live. But you will see him in heaven. We will see Jesus—in his full divine glory. He will be our light in heaven—shining brighter than the sun. We will see him because through his suffering, death, and resurrection, he made us as he is—perfect and holy. And we will live with him in heaven forever. Amen.