

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen. (NIV84)

Theme: A Glimpse of God’s Glory.

1. The Lord’s.
2. Ours

“He puts his pants on one leg at a time.” You often hear this phrase when talking about a celebrity, athlete, CEO, or someone else who seems to be better, more gifted, more power, have more money, and so on. It means that this person who has accomplished so much more than you, isn’t really all that different than you—he’s a human just like the rest of us. In fact, if you try hard and get a certain amount of luck, then you can be just as successful/popular/famous as he is. And that is a nice sentiment, especially if you want to lift someone up who is feeling down about herself; and it has some sort of truth to it. But the reality is that we are not all alike, we all have various gifts and abilities; and yet, as sinful human beings, we all have certain limitations.

Jesus, of course, is different. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a Virgin Mary—he is both God and man. Your mom and your dad were

excited when you were born, as were some close relatives and friends. They took some pictures and sent them to people, posted them on facebook, and so on. But there wasn’t a choir of angels singing your praises the day you were born, nor did a special star appear in the sky. No one has bowed down to worship you—especially before you were old enough to walk, talk, or feed yourself.

By the time Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of the mountain, they had been following him around for about three years. They saw the miracles, they were witnesses when he raised people from the dead, they were there when he cast out demons. Most importantly, they heard Jesus preach. He was their teacher who showed them the truths of God’s Word. They knew and believed that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, the Son of God, God himself, and the Savior of the world. A week before this Jesus asked his disciples, **who do you say I am?** And Peter replied, **you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.**

So the disciples knew and believed that Jesus was true God and true man and thus also the Savior. And so do you. That is why you are here today worshiping the Lord. You wouldn’t be here unless you believe that Jesus is the true God and true man and also the Savior of the world. Maybe you’ve grown up in the Church—and the stories of Jesus have a special place in your hearts. Maybe you are newer to the faith—and yet, you love and believe in Jesus just the same.

And yet, what often happens? Doubt start to creep in. Adam and Eve knew and believed in God—they were perfectly in-tune with his will and were completely righteous. But the devil came in the form of a serpent and convinced them that God wasn’t telling them the truth, that he didn’t love them and was scared of them, and if they ate the forbidden fruit they would become like them.

If Adam and Eve, who were created perfect and holy—in God’s image, were not immune to the temptations of Satan, then you aren’t either. Maybe you listen to what modern science says is correct about the formation of the world and doubts about the biblical account creep into your mind—and if God lied about how he created the world, what else did he lie about? Maybe you listen to what society says is morally right and you wonder why God would condemn someone for doing what comes natural. Maybe you are like Judas who succumbed to the temptation of a happier life through money and possessions which led

him to reject Jesus and his Word. Then there is Peter, who gave that great confession of faith and who was there on the Mount of Transfiguration. When people started mocking and accusing him of knowing Jesus on the night he was arrested, on three separate occasions, he denied even knowing Jesus. There are times in our lives when we have doubts about God's Word; that we may even deny what we know and believe to be true.

Jesus knows, of course, that we face the temptation to doubt every day so he took his three closest disciples up to the top of a mountain. It must have been late, because Peter, James, and John fell asleep on the top of the mountain. But when they woke up Jesus' figure had changed. Mark says, **the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** And there on the top of the Mountain Jesus was talking to two men, apparently Moses and Elijah, who had come down from heaven to talk to Jesus.

Jesus was giving his inner circle a glimpse of his glory. He was showing them what they already knew and believed—that he truly is divine, that he is the Son of God and God himself. Sure, he looked like them and he was fully human. But he isn't exactly like us. Sure, if he would have worn pants, he would have put them on one leg at a time. The difference is that his legs are the legs of God! No one here can change their appearance, no one here can have their clothes shine like lightning. But Jesus did because he is God; and as God he has divine power and majesty. And he was born without sin and never once did he fail to obey God's commands. And so he is like us, but he's not. He is greater.

As Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah a cloud came and enveloped them. This cloud is similar to the cloud that accompanied the Lord when he appeared to the people in the Old Testament. The Lord is so great and glorious and we are so sinful that we cannot look upon the Lord in his full glory and live. We see this to some extent in our first lesson for today. After Moses talked with God his face shined so brightly that the people couldn't look at him because they were afraid at their appearance. And so Moses covered his face with a veil. If Moses' face shined so brightly by just talking with God, imagine the glory and splendor of the Lord!

It is too much for us to handle in our sinful nature—too much for Peter, James, and John too. So out of love for them he covered

himself. He hid his glory from them in a cloud. So while he revealed himself and his glory he kept them from death.

And then they heard a voice come from the cloud—the voice of the Father, **This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.** If the disciples didn't get the point by seeing a glimpse of Jesus' glory, the Father made it known to them—Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the one he chose to be the Savior of the world.

This is the same voice heard by the people at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he was baptized. There the Holy Spirit came and landed upon Jesus in the form of a dove and the Father spoke similar words from heaven, **You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.** Both times the Father spoke he reminded those present of the same thing—Jesus' divinity!

By the time the Transfiguration takes place Jesus' ministry is on the downslope. In about six months or so he would be arrested, tried, and sentenced to death on a cross. As those three disciples saw Jesus suffer and die, they could have remembered the glimpse of divine glory that Jesus gave them. Yes, he would die because he is true man, but at the same time he is also true God who has power over death and would rise from the dead!

Ash Wednesday is this week. As we focus on the suffering and death of Jesus, we are reminded of the same thing. Jesus willingly went to his death so that he could do what God chose him to do—save us from our sins. Jesus, who just showed us his divine glory, humbled himself to the point of death so that he could be our Savior!

While we focus on Jesus on this Transfiguration Sunday—and for good reason, it is also good to look a bit at Moses and Elijah. Why were these two men talking with Jesus? Moses was the one to whom God gave the law on Mount Sinai. Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus said shortly before his ascension, **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.** Moses' work was finished by Joshua, Elijah's by Elisha (another form of the name Joshua). They now spoke with Jesus (whose Hebrew name was Joshua). Moses and Elijah's ministry pointed to Jesus and is ultimately fulfilled and completed by him. They are the old who are replaced by Christ through his death and resurrection.

They came to talk to Jesus about his departure—obviously a reference to his suffering and death. The Greek word used here for departure is

literally, “exodus.” At the time of Moses the people escaped Egypt after the 10th plague—the killing of the first born. That night of the first Passover the people took the blood of lamb without blemish or defect and smeared it on their doorposts and when the angel of the Lord saw this blood he passed over their houses and saved them from death. In the same way Jesus, whom Peter calls the Passover Lamb, shed his blood on the cross to save us from eternal death and bring us out of physical death into eternal life!

There is another aspect of Moses and Elijah that is good to remember. Moses and Elijah were just like us—they were sinners who could not save themselves. While on this earth they couldn’t see God in his full glory and live. And yet, what were they doing on the top of that mountain? They were talking to Jesus face to face. Jesus in his shining glory, without being hidden or hiding their faces.

And they themselves were shining in glorious splendor. How could they do this? We can’t see God in his full glory and live because we are sinners who would be looking at the perfect and holy Lord. But that is what Jesus accomplished by his suffering and death; He came to make us pure and holy in God’s sight by taking our sins upon himself, suffering the eternal punishment that we deserved, and giving us his perfect life. And with our sins removed far from us the Lord declares us not guilty. And so we know that when we die we will share in Christ’s glory just like Moses and Elijah. Paul talked about this in our second lesson for today just as he does in Romans 8, **Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**

The glory of Christ—that is a glimpse of what he shows us today and that glory is what is ours through faith in him. In heaven we share in his glory, as we live with him and see him in his full glory as John says in his first letter, **now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

“He puts his pants on one leg at a time.” Sure, Jesus is like us; but he’s not exactly like us. He is far greater; the glimpse of his glory proves that he truly is God. As we enter into the season of Lent on Wednesday we remark at how the Lord humbled himself to the point of death to remove our sins and give us his perfect life so that we may

share in his glory and see him with our own eyes in his glorious splendor forever. Amen.