

**Mark 9:2-9**After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain where they were alone by themselves. There he was transfigured in front of them. <sup>3</sup>His clothes became radiant, dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And Elijah appeared to them together with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup>He did not know what to say because they were terrified.

<sup>7</sup>A cloud appeared and overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.”

<sup>8</sup>Suddenly when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus alone.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Here we are on the precipice of another Lenten Season. I don’t know about you, but though I won’t say Lent will *never* be the same, it’s going to take a while so that it doesn’t bring back thoughts of when this whole pandemic began. It’s been almost a year — Lent was later last year — when we got news of those first few cases in our country. And then in our state. And then our state and the whole country shut down and we stopped worshiping in person for ten weeks, which included the bulk of our Lenten preparation and Easter Celebration. Those are just the thoughts that I associate with the season of Lent now. Hopefully it’s not permanent.

Our text before us on this Transfiguration Sunday reminds us of a very important, if not the most important truth for us in this life. Because we don’t know what’s going to happen, we don’t know how far God’s will goes down the pandemic path, the political divide path, or even the “how long is he going to let this life go on” path. Whatever thoughts we might associate with the Season of Lent, it’s because of *this* season, it’s because of *Jesus*, that no matter what, no matter where we are or what’s going on, everything is going to be ok. We can add to Peter’s off the cuff request and make it a perspective for our lives: Anywhere with Jesus is a good place to be.

Moses and Elijah would have certainly agreed with that. Imagine those two talking with Jesus. Now we know those two were chosen for this cross-world rendezvous because Moses represented the Law and Elijah the Prophets — in other words they represented the entire Old Testament — the Law and the Prophets. It was a nod of sorts, but more than that a testimonial of testimonials that this Jesus was the Savior God had promised and whom the prophets had repeatedly said was coming.

But think of Moses for a moment. We usually picture him walking down the mountain of God carrying the Ten Commandments, the pinnacle of his time on the pages of Scripture. Moses the Lawgiver. Did he ever meet a single person who had kept the law he carried down the mountain? In fact he had to come down the mountain *when* he did because his people were already breaking the very first commandment. And from that day on he never saw anyone able to keep it. His brother Aaron, the high priest who oversaw the sacrifices for sin was never out of work, and his work never slowed down.

And if Moses were to meet us today, as he stood with Jesus, he would see nothing different in us. Sinners through and through. Lawbreakers the lot of us. But as he stood with *Jesus*, finally he was with someone who was fulfilling God’s law. Finally the one God had promised had come, just as he said he would, from Moses’ own brothers. Certainly it was a good place to be!

And it had to have been similar for Elijah. The one he prophesied about while coming under constant threat of torture and death saw not so much the fruit of his labor but the object of his life’s work, the promised Messiah was here! Certainly it was a good place to be!

And then there was Peter. He didn’t have the perspective of Moses and Elijah. He wasn’t in awe of the fulfillment of a prophecy thousands of years old. He saw the power, saw the divinity in Jesus, saw what his future could be with such a close connection to this God-man, and he didn’t want it to end. The first glimpse of Jesus’ real glory, not hidden in some healing or miracle or sign, but the raw power of God streaming from his face, that was it, that was all he wanted. **Rabbi, it is good for us to be here!** I’m sure it was! Anywhere with Jesus is a good place to be — especially there in his glory.

But what about when the going got tough? What about when Peter couldn't see God's glory shining from Jesus' face? What about when it was Jesus' life on the line? What about when it was his own? Because those are not places that seemed very good.

In the coming weeks we'll see Peter and the rest of the disciples not remain with Jesus. They'll scatter like rats from a sinking ship. Mount Calvary, or Golgotha as it was called, the place of the skull, the site of Jesus' crucifixion was a long way from this Mount of Jesus' Transfiguration. Here, things looked great. That's the Savior I want to follow. That's the Savior I want to live for. But there on Calvary and the day leading up to it, the arrest and capture, the beatings and mockery, the trial, lies, and condemnation, the cross, the scorn, the shame... that was too much. There was no thought of putting up 3 shelters anymore. It was every man for himself.

We can relate to Peter. Things in this life haven't felt so glorious lately. From covid to politics to social unrest and division...between those 3 things we've had to change how we live, our outlook for the future, our habits, what we talk about, who we talk about them with. Maybe with Lent beginning again it brings back some not so good feelings from a year ago. Maybe your hope is hurt, your trust is tested, your faith is frustrated, your future seems upside down.

That's where the disciples were, especially after the Transfiguration. They thought things were on the up and up. The future they had always hoped for with Jesus, ruling on earth, seemed to be coming to fruition. But they were slowly beginning to understand that they couldn't ignore Jesus' talk about his impending death at the hands of his own people forever.

Oh, they saw Jesus' glory on the mountain, but they let the things of this world, the things they saw with their eyes overshadow the glory so that it was an anomaly, something they saw but could not figure out how to reconcile with what they saw happening to Jesus.

And that was the devil's goal for them. To let Jesus' glory fade from their minds as quickly as they saw it fade from his face. And that's his goal for us too, to use the things of this world to cause Jesus' glory then, and the glory he has waiting for us there, to fade from our minds. And on top of the things we see around us, he uses the sinful things we've done, or have

thought, or have said, to think that we aren't worthy to stand in Jesus' glory.

And the truth is we're not worthy. We're sinners, lawbreakers the lot of us. Like the disciples in the cloud, unable to stand before God, terrified, so too should we be. The reality of our sins, the reality of the punishment we deserve, if we really understand it, it's too much.

The disciples were not expecting to be standing in God's presence that day. Peter said it was good to be there, but Mark quickly adds that he didn't know what he was saying because he was so afraid, as they all were. Perhaps standing in the presence of God didn't feel as good as Peter was letting on.

How can it be? None of us knows that moment we will stand before God either. It's an intimidating, daunting, unnerving thought to be a sinner suddenly standing in the presence of the God who said, "**Be holy as I am holy. Be perfect as I am perfect.**"

I wonder if anything felt good for those disciples between the Transfiguration and the evening of Jesus' resurrection. As they watched Jesus walk slowly to his impending death, none of it made sense. They could not see God's power, how this could be his will, or turn out to be anything good.

But there in that upper room on Easter Sunday, behind locked doors — because things were not good, Jesus appeared to them and assured them of his power. There they remembered his glory and began to understand what he had done. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was God's plan all along. The battle between heaven and hell, good and evil, mankind and the devil, was over. Jesus had won, Satan was defeated, their eyes opened.

With Jesus their risen and victorious Savior, everywhere was a good place to be. In Jerusalem, surrounded by many of the same Jews who called for Jesus' death, they were not afraid. They boldly proclaimed what they had done to the Son of God, and what he had done for them. Even as they remembered Mount Calvary and Golgotha, the place of the skull, the site of Jesus' crucifixion, it too, was a good place to be. For while his power and glory were hidden, there Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world rendering Satan powerless, the arrows of his lies and accusations pointless.

With Jesus our Savior, our sins are forgiven, our life is secure, our eternal life in heaven is waiting for us, the same is true for us: With Jesus, everywhere is a good place to be.

As we start a new season of the church year, as we begin our journey to the cross this week, hold on to Jesus' glory. It will be hidden. His power muted. But at just the right time, when the world would least expect it, we will see it: at the cross and at the tomb, we will be able to say, it is good for us to be here!

Even in difficult times, in turmoil, pain, and loss, with Jesus' life for us we are perfect in God's sight. With Jesus' death in our place, our sins are paid for. We can look ahead to standing in God's presence, whenever that day should come, without fear, trepidation, but with one thought on our minds — it's good for us to be here. It will be!

So with our futures intact, at the end of any day each of us can say the same thing. It is good for us to be here.

Because it's true: Anywhere with Jesus is a good place to be. His victory over sin, death, hell, and the devil fills us with hope, strengthens our trust, and bolsters our faith no matter where we are, no matter what we are going through, no matter what this world says, no matter what we've done. Our future is secure. God's glory is in his grace, mercy and forgiveness, won for all through the life, death, and resurrection of his one and only Son, Jesus.

Hold on to his glory this Lenten season. Hold on to it throughout your life, so that whether you're coming or going, waking or sleeping, living or dying you will say, "Anywhere with Jesus is a good place to be." Amen!