

## Sermon Transfiguration 2019

March 3, 2019

Luke 9: 28-36

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate upon the Transfiguration of our Lord, especially Peter's words, "**Master, it is good that we are here.**"

It's good that we are here. Location means something, doesn't it? It means something that you all come here to hear the Word, and don't watch it on your TV. It means something to go to the grocery store and not get it delivered. It means something to go to a restaurant rather than eat in. And along with location meaning something, so does presence. Being in the same location as another. I found that with my dad when I was with him those days. It meant something to be there. You know, we didn't have great in depth conversation. His speech aphasia frustrated him to the point that he would try to speak, the thoughts were in his head, but they wouldn't come out. The more complex the topic, the more frustrated he would get. Between that and the fact that he slept a good portion of the time, we didn't talk a great deal. But it meant something to be there. There were a number of days when I would be leaving him to go be with Jessica and the kids after a lengthy stay, and I still wanted to remain in his presence.

Presence means something. As Peter is there in the presence of Jesus on that mountain, he knows this means something. Now, as I say that, it's sort of obvious, I know, but think about it. We so often consider that God is everywhere, and yet here Peter wanted to set up these tents there. Why?

Well you have to understand that in the Old Testament, the promise of God's presence in a location was a really big deal. In fact, look at how that goes. Where do they worship in the Old Testament? They worship at the temple. Why? Because that's where the Ark is. And why is that important? Well on the one hand, the Ark is the mercy seat. It's the place where the High Priest comes and he brings the sacrifice on Yom Kippur. And as He does that He brings forgiveness of sins from the Lord to the people of Israel. How? Because God's Word promised it. But think also about the Ark. Do you remember in the Exodus how God very specifically described to them how to construct the Ark, how to construct the Tabernacle which housed the Ark, and the whole Tent of Meeting, etc.? Do you remember what happened once they constructed

the Ark and the Tabernacle? They got the whole thing together, then they're ready to offer sacrifices according to God's Word—of course you see we don't get to make up how we come to God, how we get forgiveness, it's always by His promise—but they've got it all set up, and what happens? Do you remember? They're there at the Tabernacle, Moses and Israel, then the Glory of God filled it. The Cloud that had shown God's presence went over the Tabernacle, it covered it and the Glory filled that place where the Ark was. So not only was the Ark there, but there was God. Do you see the beauty of the Tabernacle then? The beauty of the Ark?

Do you want to know where to come to God so that you can have forgiveness? Do you want to know where to meet God where you can know that He'll make you holy like Him, and His holiness won't consume you—or according to Indiana Jones, melt your face? Where do you meet Him? In the Old Testament, it's at that Ark. Presence is important. Location is important.

And that's where we find Peter in this reading. He's thinking that here on this mountain is where Jesus is bringing the Kingdom of God. Here on this Holy Mountain, as he calls it in his second letter, here is where Jesus is going to manifest that presence of God for eternity. It's good for Peter to be here, right? It's good for him to be able to see this. It's good for him to experience the light of the holiness of God. And wouldn't it be good if others could too? Wouldn't it make sense, after all?

Here they could just move the shop from the Temple in Jerusalem to this mountain. And wouldn't it be great? I mean after all, you wouldn't just have this Jesus, this man who is God in the flesh, no you get the added bonus of Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets! The presence, the location doesn't get any better than that does it?

But what's the issue? Certainly there are a few, but the big issue is that this mountain isn't the right one for the Kingdom. Why? Ultimately the cross is, right? But, Peter doesn't get what has to happen. Poor Peter, he's always struggling with this. We hear him when he gets it right, when he calls Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But what happens right after that? He messes it right up, doesn't he? Then he tells Jesus that the Lord will suffer and die over his, over Peter's dead body, right? Then there's the denial. It's all coming to a head, Jesus is moving to the fulfillment of what He's there to do, and Peter can't handle it. He denies the Lord three times. No Peter can't get it right.

But neither can we, can we? I always say how much I remember getting frustrated with Peter when I was young. And not just Peter, all the disciples. Why didn't they get it? Why didn't they understand Jesus? His words were so clear, they were supposed to be humble, they weren't supposed to think of themselves as greater than the other. They weren't supposed to be afraid of Jesus' arrest, his beating, his death. They weren't supposed to balk at any of it. When Jesus didn't bring in this eschatological kingdom they were thinking He would, they were supposed to get it. Why didn't they get it?

Now I understand. We think in these sinful terms, and we get more practiced at it as we get old. Why should we love our enemies? Why should we forgive those who hurt us? Why should we suffer when we can have comfort and enjoyment? Why shouldn't we build the tents on the holy mountain of the Transfiguration? Jesus is there as God, Moses is there, Elijah is there. **"Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."**

Oh, we're so close. Yet we're so far. Peter was right there, but He was so far. And so God showed Him, there He was. There was the cloud. Just like the cloud had come over the tabernacle and the glory filled that place, the cloud came over that mountain. The glory had shown now to be in Jesus and not the Ark, but this wasn't the end. Now, now it was the call to listen to this beloved Son of God. "Peter this is My Son, whom I love, listen to Him."

And Peter should have. He should have listened to the conversation about the departure Jesus was having with Moses and Elijah. You see that departure, that was Jesus' exodus in the Greek. Just like Moses had an exodus out of Egypt, Jesus was on the path for his exodus. His exodus to the cross. That's what Peter was missing. That's what we miss. When the world and all its manure falls down on us, that's what we miss: the cross. The other mount, the mount of Calvary. That's the end of it. That's the location. Why? Because it's the glory of that mount that enables us to come into God's presence eternally. It's in that blood shed from Jesus, in the words that He speaks, **"It is finished,"** it's in that place that the Father shows us the fullest glory of all: the glory of the God who came into flesh to suffer.

What glory is that, Christians? What glory is that? Your God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that God is the One who has seen your suffering, He has seen all the horror of this sin fallen world; He has seen all of the burden that comes to you in this and He

sees the cause: sin. And in the greatest of the glory, He has taken that sin upon Himself and carried it. He has bled for it, died for it. And He has done this on that mountain to become the new Ark, the new mercy seat for your sin. And He has been raised to declare that it's all done. On the location of that mountain, because location is important.

Yes location is important, and so is presence. So, where is that presence for you, now? We're talking all of this 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, where is God for you now? Well, in this Transfiguration of Jesus, in this whole Christmas and Post-Christmas season where we've looked at Jesus as Emmanuel, as God with us, we have to ask that, don't we? Where is this presence now? In what location can we find Jesus?

Hopefully you know that. Hopefully you know that you find this presence where the Word is located. Where the Word is in the Holy Scriptures. Hopefully you know that where Jesus sends His called men to proclaim that Word in your hearing, there He is, there you hear His voice of mercy and forgiveness for you. Hopefully you know that He met you in the glory of that water poured over you with that Word, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And hopefully you know that He meets you at this rail, His glory hidden under bread and wine, unlike how it shone before Peter's eyes. But hopefully you know that here is where He is for you, body and blood for your forgiveness.

Yes Christian, location matters, presence matters. Why do we push against this? Why do we push and not seek to be here week in and week out? Why do other things seem so much more important? We know that joy, and how a part of us is drawn to it, but how that sinner gets bored with it. We know that comfort, because this is where the God who created us, who redeems us, who sanctifies us, where this God promises to be. Yes, location, presence, they matter. May this God grant to us always to seek to be where He is, where His Word tells us He will always meet us. May He grant us that, so that we may have the joy of His eternal presence in His Kingdom forever. Amen.