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And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 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.” 5 He was still speaking when, 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.” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. 9 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.” (Matthew 17:1-9 ESV)

Grace, Mercy and Peace unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are moments when the curtain is pulled back. Not often. Not for long. But just long enough to see what is normally hidden. In our Gospel this morning we are given such a moment. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, away from the crowds, away from the noise, away even from the other disciples. And there, for a brief moment, they see Jesus as He truly is. Not merely as teacher. Not only as miracle worker. Not simply as the one who speaks with authority. But as the eternal Son of God in divine glory. This is not a change into something else. Jesus does not become divine on the mountain. Rather, His divinity normally hidden beneath human flesh is allowed to shine through. The One who was baptized in the muddy waters of the Jordan, the One who eats with sinners, the One who will soon be beaten and crucified this same Jesus now shines like the sun. The Transfiguration is not just a beautiful story. It is a revelation. It answers the most important question of all: Who is Jesus? And it prepares us for what comes next: the cross.

Matthew places this event very carefully. Just six days earlier, Jesus had asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter had answered rightly: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But immediately after that confession, Jesus began to speak plainly about suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. Peter recoiled. He rebuked Jesus. A suffering Messiah made no sense to him. So Jesus speaks even more clearly: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” That is the context. Cross before crown. Suffering before glory. And now before the disciples can fully grasp it Jesus gives them a glimpse of the glory that

lies on the other side of the cross. Not to distract them from suffering, but to anchor them through it.

Matthew writes, “He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” This is not symbolism. This is not metaphor. This is not a dream. This is revelation. The Greek word for “transfigured” tells us that Jesus’ appearance was changed outwardly to reveal an inward reality. His divine glory—normally veiled—is now visible. This is the same glory Moses once asked to see. The same glory Isaiah glimpsed in the temple. The same glory that filled the tabernacle and later the temple. And now it stands on a mountain, wearing human flesh. Jesus is not merely reflecting God’s glory. He is the glory of God. As the writer to the Hebrews will later say, He is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.” The disciples are not looking at a holy man who has been elevated. They are looking at God the Son.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appear, talking with Jesus. This is no accident. Moses represents the Law. Elijah represents the Prophets. Together, they stand for the entire Old Testament Scriptures. And what are they doing? They are not receiving instruction from Jesus. They are not correcting Him. They are not sharing the spotlight. They are speaking with Him as witnesses. Luke tells us they are speaking about His “departure,” His exodus, which He is about to accomplish at Jerusalem. In other words, they are talking about the cross. The Law and the Prophets do not compete with Jesus. They point to Him. They testify that everything written every command, every promise, every sacrifice, every prophecy finds its fulfillment in Him. Jesus is not one voice among many. He is the One to whom all Scripture leads.

Peter, overwhelmed and afraid, speaks. “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.” Peter means well. But he misunderstands. He wants to stay on the mountain. He wants to preserve the moment. He wants glory without suffering, light without darkness, resurrection without crucifixion. And notice something important: Peter puts Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the same level. Three tents. Three equals. But Jesus is not one among three. And the Father will not allow that confusion to stand. While Peter is still speaking, a bright cloud overshadows them. This is not an ordinary cloud. This is the same cloud that filled the tabernacle, that led Israel through the wilderness, that descended on Mount Sinai. This is the visible presence of God. And from the cloud comes a voice: “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” These words echo Jesus’ baptism, but with an added command. At the Jordan, the Father spoke about Jesus. On the mountain, He speaks to the disciples. Listen to Him. Not to Moses as the final word. Not to Elijah as the ultimate authority. Not to your own instincts, fears, or expectations. Listen to Him. This is crucial. The disciples will soon hear Jesus speak words they do not want to hear about suffering, betrayal, death, and the cross. The Father prepares them now: when Jesus speaks those words, listen.

When the disciples hear the voice, they fall on their faces in terror. This is the proper response to the holy God. Sinners cannot stand unprotected in His presence. But then something beautiful

happens. Jesus comes to them. He touches them. And He says, “Rise, and have no fear.” The same Jesus whose face shines like the sun now lays His hand on trembling sinners. The same voice that commands storms now speaks comfort. And when they lift up their eyes, they see no one but Jesus only. Moses is gone. Elijah is gone. The cloud has lifted. Jesus remains. This is the heart of the Transfiguration. When all is said and done, when the Law has done its accusing work, when the Prophets have spoken their promises Jesus only remains as Savior.

As they come down the mountain, Jesus orders them not to tell anyone what they have seen until after the Son of Man is raised from the dead. Why? Because without the cross and resurrection, the Transfiguration would be misunderstood. It would become a spectacle. A proof-text for triumph without sacrifice. But the glory revealed on the mountain only makes sense in light of the cross. The One who shines like the sun will soon hang in darkness. The One declared beloved will cry out as forsaken. The One clothed in radiant white will be stripped and mocked. And yet it is the same Jesus. The Transfiguration tells us that the cross is not a defeat. It is the chosen path of the glorious Son of God for the salvation of the world.

This text confronts us with Law. Like Peter, we often want a Christ of glory without suffering. A Christ who fixes problems but never calls us to repentance. A Christ who inspires but does not demand our death and resurrection. We want mountaintop experiences. We want clarity, light, certainty. But we resist the valley, the cross, the hiddenness of God’s work. We also struggle to listen. We listen to our fears. We listen to the culture. We listen to our own reason and strength. And when Jesus speaks words that challenge us—about sin, repentance, self-denial—we are tempted to correct Him, soften His words, or ignore them. The Father’s command exposes our sin: Listen to Him. But the Gospel shines even brighter. “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” That pleasure does not remain locked between Father and Son. It flows outward to us. Because the Beloved Son goes to the cross for us. Because the glory revealed on the mountain is willingly hidden on Good Friday for us. Because the voice that commands us to listen also sends Jesus to die in our place for us. In Christ, God is well pleased with sinners. And the same Jesus who touched terrified disciples still comes to us today—not in visible glory, but in Word and Sacrament. Hidden, yes. But no less real.

We do not climb a mountain to see Jesus shine. We hear His voice in Scripture. We receive His body and blood at the altar. We are washed into His death and resurrection in Baptism. Here, His glory is hidden—but His grace is fully given. And one day, the veil will be lifted permanently. The same Jesus will return in glory. Not just for a moment. Not just for three disciples. But for all who trust in Him. Until then, we walk down the mountain. We carry our crosses. We listen to Him. And we go in peace knowing who Jesus truly is.

At the end of the vision, the disciples see Jesus only. That is enough. Enough for faith. Enough for forgiveness. Enough for life and salvation. To Him be the glory now hidden, one day revealed forever. Amen.