**In the Cross of Christ I Glory**

Based on [Luke 9:28-36](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk9.28-36)

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Transfiguration Sunday

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I. We walk by Faith, not by sight

II. Faith Comes through hearing the Word

III. Faith shows us the glory of God in the suffering and death of his son

For us, living some 2000 years after our Lord walked the earth, it's easy to wonder how anyone could have rejected Jesus and put him on a cross. One of the biggest "proofs" today that God doesn't exist is the fact that He's not here; we can't see him, or at least he doesn't show himself to us. "How convenient," sneer the scoffers. So we think, "**If only Jesus would have walked the earth in our time. That would shut the scoffers' mouths and cast aside the doubts. If Jesus were here today, they would see him and then they would have to believe in God.**"

Of course, it's not like that. 2000 years ago, when the Son of God came down from heaven, was born of Mary, did miracles and signs, suffered and died on the cross...he didn't look like God. He looked like an average Joe; an average "Jew." Sure he did things that amazed the people around him, but people have short attention spans. The crowds quickly snapped out of it because his glory was hidden. While teaching in Nazareth, his hometown, the people marveled at Jesus' teaching ***at first***. But they quickly sobered up came back down to earth and said, "**Isn't this the son of Joseph the carpenter**." Once Jesus fed the 5000 with only five loaves of bread and two fish. But by the end of the day, many of his disciples left him because he taught them a hard thing, having forgotten the glory of his miracle.

Not unlike us, is it? The Bible has recorded in it the words of eternal life. We read or hear it and believe it and we are changed by faith. But then time goes by. We get tangled up in our own problems and cares in the world. And we forget. We look at the bible and it looks like just another book. We look at the pastor and he looks like just another sinner. We look at the bread and wine of communion and think, “**How ordinary**.” We look at water poured on a baby's head in baptism and think, "**I don't see anything special**." Why can't these things be transfigured, so that we can see the power and the glory behind their ordinary appearance?

Friends in Christ, this is because the kingdom of God is perceived by faith, not by sight. And faith is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, given by the Holy Spirit working through His Word. Faith comes by hearing. As a child of God you don't believe your eyes, you believe your ears...God's Word.

**A week or so after I marry a couple, I often see them and ask the newlyweds how they feel now that they're married. The usual response is "feels the same."** They're telling the truth, I'm sure. They have become one flesh but that is not a feeling. It’s not something that looks different. "The two shall become one flesh," that is something that happens by the work of God, and is apprehended by faith, not by sight. Your spouse is your other half, not because you get along so well, or because you’re the perfect pair, but because God says so. **And so when struggles come in marriage and make us doubt that it'll ever work out, we have God's promise that He has joined man and wife.** We can trust our marriages to endure for richer for poorer till death us do part, not by sight, but by faith.

This is how God wants us to walk, by faith not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). **And so when he sent his Son into our flesh; he didn't *look like* God; and this is so that he too could be apprehended by faith.**

But today we have an anomaly with the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It is perhaps the only time during Jesus ministry that he actually looked like God--appeared as God--to the eyes of those who saw him.

I've heard any number of people scoff and say that the bible is just a bunch of myths. This is nothing new. The apostles themselves had to deal with such criticisms. So Peter reminds the church that he and the apostles saw Jesus transfigured with their own eyes, they witnessed his glory. Peter writes in his second epistle, "**For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty"** (2 Peter 1:16).

That's the wonderful treasure we have with God's word. It is trustworthy. Though we walk by faith; it is a faith grounded in what was seen by others. Moses says in Deuteronomy 19 that amongst God’s people every matter must be ***established*** on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Jesus says in Matthew 18, If your brother sins and he doesn't listen to you, take one or two others along that every charge may be ***established*** by two or three witnesses (Matthew 18:18). Paul says in 1 Timothy 5, "**Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the testimony of two or three witnesses**" (1 Timothy 5:19). Establishing the facts with multiple witnesses and sticking to the facts, that's been God’s charge to his people since the beginning. And so, when the devil tries to make you doubt the words and the stories of the bible because they're too good to be true, or that we can never know what Jesus really said or whether it’s all myths and fables, remind yourself that he's the one who is a murderer and liar, not God. God's word is truth, and even on a human level, God's word and work in human history was not carelessly recorded or believed.

On the mount of transfiguration, Jesus is seen speaking with Moses and Elijah in glory. When Peter saw them, he said, "**Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.**" The bible says he did not know what he was saying, but it’s actually a rational response. The purpose of a tent it to sojourn, to stay a while in a certain place. Peter saw this glory, the majesty of God and he wanted it to remain to stay. He wanted Jesus, Moses, and Elijah to stay on earth in their glory.

God's word is his presence among us. John 1 says, "**The Word became flesh and dwelt, literally "tented" among us.**" What greater gift than to know that God is with us, in his word, by his Spirit?

When the risen Jesus journeys with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he teaches them the Scriptures and how they are about him. They don’t realize it’s Jesus risen from the dead, but their hearts burn within them as he's teaching. And when evening approaches, they reach the village and Jesus acted like he was going to go farther, but they urged him strongly saying, "**Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent**" (Luke 24:29). They want Jesus, though they didn't know it was Jesus, to sojourn with them, to remain with them, because he opened up the scriptures for them. And once they recognize it is Jesus, he vanishes from their sight, so that he can abide in their faith.

Friends we live in a world where the things of God cannot be seen, only by faith. And the eyes of faith are given life as we sojourn with Jesus in his word. We need his Word every day, to hear it, consider it, because if we don't, we become blind to the things of God. Just as the mouth feeds on bread so that the body can live; Faith feeds on God's Word so that it can see.

Peter didn't understand this yet, or at least he didn't understand how the kingdom of God works. Peter saw Jesus glory, but he did not yet have faith in the gospel: that in a world of sin; suffering comes before glory; that death comes before victory. This is the same Peter that, when Jesus said he was going to suffer and die and rise again, he said "**Let it not be so Lord.**" Jesus rebuked him and said, "**Get behind me Satan, for you do not have your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.**"

So it is that Jesus, Moses and Elijah, while in glory on the mountain are talking about Jesus, "exodus", that is, his departure. They are talking about his death, resurrection and ascension. And these things must take place first, they are necessary before Jesus can be seated at the right hand of Glory. But his departure from our eyes, is so that he can dwell in our faith.

The message of salvation is not that we ascend the mountain to the glory of God. Rather it is that the son of God descended from heaven to the sinfulness of man. Suffering before glory. And this is plain in Jesus’ own words. **When Jesus speaks of his being glorified, he doesn’t speak of his majestic appearance, his glowing in glorious light or anything like that.** He speaks of his being lifted up on the cross, that’s what his glory looks like to eyes of faith. The glory of god on earth is in sending his son to suffer all things to deliver us.

Some people are offended at the sight of a crucifix. They might rather have a transfigured glowing picture of Jesus. Victory is their theme, and to the naked eye a crucifix looks like a defeat. "**Jesus is not dead anymore**,” they say “**he is raised, he has the victory**." That's true, but the visible glory of God has ascended into heaven, and we are still on earth. And earth has not been glorified yet. It is still a veil of tears. Here, the devil still prowls like a roaring lion. Here we still have death and funerals and weeping and tears. And here, a victorious looking god is of little comfort. A victorious God is a distant looking god, a god who is far away from our problems, far away from our groaning, far away from our sin, far away from our sicknesses and death.

But a suffering and dying God on a cross, such a God is near to us. A suffering God is not above our struggles, that god is not shining on a mountaintop, but down in the doldrums, in the ghetto with us. He knows our pain, he knows our sin. Hebrews 4:15 says, "**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin**."

On the last day, when the final trumpet sounds and the dead are raised, the victorious Lord Jesus Christ will come again in glory, transfigured and awesome. On that day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. After all, you don't need faith to confess the victory of a victorious looking God. But to confess the victory of a suffering, sighing, bleeding dying God, you need faith, the faith that comes through hearing the Gospel. You need faith to believe that the most consequential event in history--the mighty act that shook the pillars of heaven and turned the condemnation of the Law on its head, the victory that disarmed death and Satan in one fell swoop--is the suffering and death of God on the cross.

And the glorious death of our Lord is here now to comfort us. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified**." And later he says of the Lord's Supper, "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes**" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ is the life of the church on earth. It is the mountaintop experience that we all seek as we look at our suffering God on Calvary, and bear our own crosses cheerfully knowing his death is our victory, his cross our glory.

*In the cross of Christ I glory,*

*Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.*

*All the light of sacred story*

*Gathers round its head sublime*

(LSB Hymn 427, Verse 1)