

"Look, and Listen"

Text: Matthew 17:1-9

May you be given the faith and the wisdom to recognize both the power and the love of God our Father, of his Holy Spirit, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, you can always spot someone who is a frequent flyer, someone who travels regularly on commercial airlines. They are the ones who know how to buckle a seatbelt. They know because they've gone through mandatory training prior to every flight. They have thereby received instruction that you just can't get anywhere else.

In reality I am amazed, every time I fly, that evidently someone in authority is convinced that there are still individuals out there who doesn't know how to buckle a seat belt. Airline passengers aren't teleported into the terminal. They don't arrive on horseback, by camel, or on jet skis. They arrive in cars and shuttle buses – all of which have those mysterious straps with shiny things attached to the ends. In fact, if you look around during those pre-flight seminars on seatbelt buckling, everyone appears to be fully trained, because no one is looking and no one is listening.

Not everything airlines talk about pre-flight is either self-evident or unimportant. Most of you that fly are also well acquainted with turbulence, or "rough air" as they call it now. Not even the pilots, with all their sophisticated equipment, can know when they're going to plow into the stuff. They fly around it when they can, but sometimes it just happens. That's why the flight attendants refer to it as "*unexpected* rough air."

Life for the Christian is like that, isn't it. We would all love stable air and smooth flying, but life always has turbulence – sometimes expected, often unexpected. Pilots tell their passengers to keep their seatbelts fastened at all times, because they never know. When it hits, it's too late to get that refresher course on how to fasten a seatbelt. Christians survive life by looking and listening *before* the turbulence hits. Obviously, what instructs us is the Word of God.

Hear now that Word of God on this Transfiguration Sunday, found recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, the Seventeenth Chapter:

ESV **Matthew 17:1-9** *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."*

This is God's Word. Concerning this very Word of God the Apostle Peter said that we would "***do well to pay attention as a to light shining in a dark place.***" We therefore focus our attention on these verbally inspired words from our God as we also pray, "***Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.***" Amen.

Like most of us, Peter's life was seldom characterized by stable air and smooth sailing. There was pitching and yawing, soaring and diving. At one moment he was giving an amazing confession of who Jesus really was and the next he trying to prevent Jesus from completing his mission to save the world. One minute he was walking on water, the next he was sinking. One minute he was wielding a sword to defend his Lord against an armed contingent and the next he was willing before the gaze of a servant girl. Most of us, if we are honest, can relate. That might, in fact, be one of the reasons Jesus chose Peter. When we look at him, we can see ourselves.

Peter encountered some unexpected rough air in our text for this morning. As one of Jesus' key men, he, along with James and John, was invited by Jesus to witness the Transfiguration. Since there was a Biblical rule that everything had to be verified by two or three witnesses, Jesus takes the three of them so that they can later testify as to what they saw. What they saw was spectacular beyond our comprehension. We'll get to that, but first let's look at Peter's reaction and try to learn something.

Peter's initial inclination upon seeing Moses, Elijah, and his transfigured Lord was to talk; to say something. Anything really. As is always the case when sinful human beings encounter anything divine, Peter, James, and John were absolutely terrified. And Peter's reaction

was to talk, to say something, coherent or otherwise. Anyone else guilty of that, where you just start saying stuff before your brain catches up with what's going on? In Mark's parallel account of this event we read: "**For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.**" ^{ESV} (Mark 9:6) Terrified, Peter's response was to just start using his words.

An interesting thing happened next. Were *you* listening? Our text says, ***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."*** Evidently Peter was still talking when his Heavenly Father cut in. His message was unmistakable. "*Peter! Stop talking! Listen! My own Son is right there in front of you. Look, and listen to what he has to say.*"

What was it that Peter was supposed to see? What was it that he was supposed to hear? We ask not because Peter needs to know the answer but because we do. You and I need to look and see. You and I need to hear and understand. Because our lives are going to experience rough air, and we need to be trained and prepared.

What we are supposed to see is described in our text: ***And Jesus was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.*** The first thing of which we need to be reminded whenever we read the Word of God is that all of the Bible is an accommodation. It is God speaking to us in a way that accommodates our profoundly limited experience and insight. Human words can never do justice to divine images. That's true, for example, when God uses earthly images to describe heaven. How naïve to image God's heaven as having actual streets paved with gold (John actually described them as *transparent* gold, which doesn't even exist, but does create an appealing image.) Or that heaven will have physical gates at all, let alone gates made of a single huge pearl. That's how John described what he saw in his vision, but it was God accommodating our level of comprehension.

We find the same in our text, which describes Jesus' face as "***shining like the sun***" and his clothes "***as white as light.***" God, through Matthew, is accommodating us. He is lowering himself to words and images that we can grasp, at least in part. That is what we are to look at this morning, but what are we supposed to actually *see*? What we are to see is not something added to Jesus, it is something taken away. We are to see the veil of Jesus' humanity lifted, just for a moment, so that we can get the briefest glimpse of just who this Jesus really is. When Jesus walked this earth, his divine nature was masked by his humanity. His divine essence was always there, we just couldn't see it. He looked not unlike any other

human being. He ate and drank, slept and woke, laughed and cried. This one time the mask was lifted, the voice from heaven spoke, and the result was predictable. The three mortal men were terrified. They were awestruck to the point of incoherence. Human words could never do justice to something like what they had just witnessed.

So why this special glimpse? Why at that particular point in time and never before or after? Although Matthew makes no mention in our text, in the parallel account in Luke 9 we read: ***And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*** From this we understand that the Transfiguration was a special event that helped prepare Jesus for what lay ahead. "***What he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem***" was his sacrificial death for the sins of the world. He was, to put it another way, about to experience the roughest of rough air.

Yet if that was all that this was, if this was only for Jesus, why did he take three witnesses? Those witnesses were told to "***tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.***" Obviously that means that they were supposed to tell everyone after Jesus rose – including you and me. You and I are therefore supposed to look. What are we supposed to see?

We are first to see Moses and Elijah. Moses was the Lawgiver, and Elijah was the Great Prophet. *Seeing*, we are to then *listen to* the words Paul wrote to the Romans: ***For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it– ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*** ^{ESV} (Romans 3:20-24) Moses and Elijah, representative of "***the Law and the Prophets,***" were here bearing witness to the culmination or fulfillment of all that they taught. Everything led to, and culminated in, Jesus. The Jews could have, should have, recognized and embraced the fact that Jesus was not a departure from "***the Law and the Prophets,***" he represented the end of their story.

The next thing that we are supposed to see, to the extent that we are able, is Jesus as he truly was and is. In Psalm 104 we read: "***Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You***

are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² covering yourself with light as with a garment.” There on the Mount of Transfiguration we are to see a glimpse of what the Psalmist was describing. In Hebrews 1:3 we also read: ***“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”*** God often describes himself in terms of brilliant light.

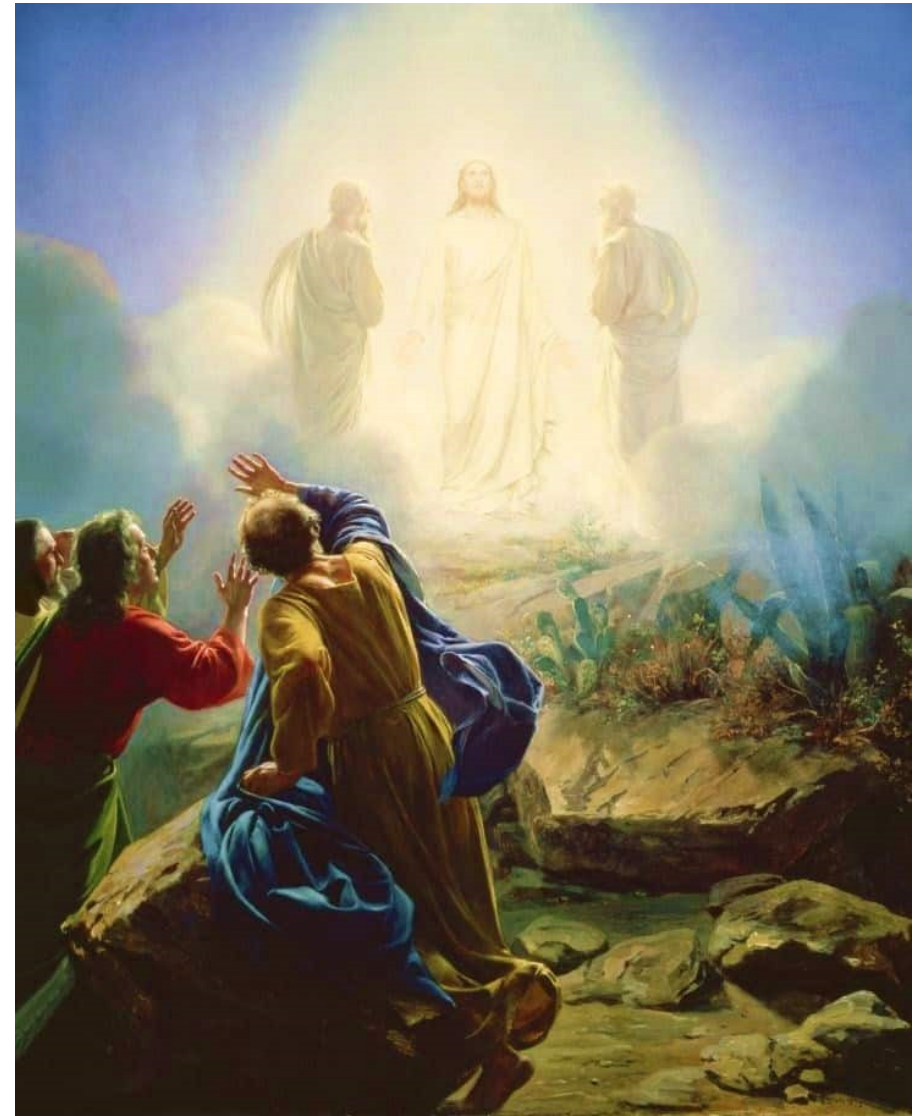
Why is it important for sinners to see Jesus in this way? To be reminded of just who it was that came to our earth, just who it was who suffered and died to pay for our sins, and to recognize the magnitude of our wickedness as determined by the price that had to be paid. A simple man did not die on the cross. The very Son of God there gave his life, the God whose brilliance and glory we cannot now fully comprehend.

Stop talking therefore. *Look and listen. See*, on that Mount of Transfiguration, just exactly who it was that hung there on Calvary’s cross. *See*, and then *listen* as that One ***“in whom dwells all the fullness of God in bodily form”*** declares, ***“It is finished!”*** Look at the empty tomb and hear in it God’s immutable declaration that the debt for mankind’s sin has been paid in full. Listen, and hear that *you* have been redeemed, restored, forgiven. There will be turbulence in each of our lives, rough air. This is now we are prepared, protected, and preserved. Look to your Savior. Listen to his voice. Amen.

ESV **Exodus 24:12-18** The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them." ¹⁵ ¶ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

ESV **2 Peter 1:16-21** 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. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

ESV **Matthew 17:1-9** 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."



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Transfiguration Sunday – February 19, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 135 (Red Hymnal)

"Tis Good Lord to Be Here"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Exodus 24:12, 15-18) We have not been privileged to see even the veiled glory of our God, yet others have. Moses saw a shadow of that glory when he received the Ten Commandments. Let his witness be enough for us as we thrill to the fact that we *will* one day behold that glory, and will exist in the presence of that glory for all eternity.

Psalm 8 (Supplement page 27) (Brown Hymnal)

The Epistle Lesson: (2 Peter 1:16-21) Peter and the other Apostles did not use "**cleverly devised fables**" in teaching the early Church about Jesus. They simply gave their eyewitness accounts. Note well Peter's suggestion to us. Though we did not see the Transfigured Jesus with our own eyes, we have seen it through his. And we have something better - His Word. "**Pay attention to that Word as to a light shining in a dark place.**"

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 719 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus on the Mountain Peak"

The Sermon – Text: Matthew 17:1-9 (Printed on the back page)

"**Look, and Listen**"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 720 (Brown Hymnal)

"Oh, Wondrous Type! Oh, Vision Fair"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 651 (Red Hymnal)

"Be Still My Soul"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (47) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Ash Wednesday Service
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting

CLC News – Pastor Neal Radichel is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. Pastor Bruce Naumann is scheduled to be commissioned as the CLC Missionary to Tanzania in a service on Sunday, March 12 (coinciding with the CLC BB Tournament). Redemption of Lynnwood and Ascension of Tacoma have called Pastor Thomas Naumann. Mrs. Eileen Tiefel has announced her retirement as kindergarten teacher at Messiah of Eau Claire. That congregation has called member Haley Seffens.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet during the fellowship hour next Sunday.

The Season of Lent – Our special Lenten Season midweek services begin this Wednesday with our Ash Wednesday service at 7pm.

Member Contact Sheet – Please take a moment this morning to check your information on the Member Contact sheet located on the mailbox table. Update any information that is out-of-date and feel free to cross out any information that you do not want to share. If your name is not currently on the list, please add a line on the back page and your information will be inserted (alphabetically) on the final copy.