

Camping with Jesus

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[0 : 00] Well, with the Lord's help this morning, we'll turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The Gospel according to Matthew, Matthew chapter 17.

Matthew chapter 17. And we're going to read from the beginning. Matthew chapter 17. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. 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. As you know, the Lord's day is the first day of a new week.

It's a day of rest. It's a day of resurrection. It's a day of renewal. But as we begin a new week, you know, I often find that it's hard to believe that we're here again.

[1 : 40] It just seems that time is flying by. And time as we know it waits for no man. There's nothing in a week. Absolutely nothing in a week. And I hope you all had a good week.

Because, as I mentioned to the children, we had a great week with our youth camp at Kincaig. It was a great week filled with fun and food and fellowship.

And as I mentioned earlier, thank you for praying for us. Thank you for remembering us. Thank you for supporting us, even your contributions of baking and donations that were made. But please continue to remember all the other camps that are taking place.

But for us at Kincaig Kids 3, it was a great week. But it was also a busy week. There were 28 kids on site. There were 11 adults. And it was a busy week.

Last Saturday, which seems like two minutes ago, we were traveling all day. And there was church on Sunday. We were in King Yusie in the morning, the Free North in the evening. Then we were raft building on Monday.

[2 : 41] We were in Landmark all day from opening till closing on Tuesday. We had mountain tubing on Wednesday, canoeing on Thursday, trampoline park on Friday, and then shopping in the afternoon, and then home again last night on Saturday.

It was a brilliant week. It was a great privilege to meet the children from all over Scotland and to spend time sharing God's Word with these young lives, praying that it will impact and influence them for good.

And as you'd expect, the week went past in a flash, because a lot can happen in a week. A lot can happen in a week. In fact, that's what we see in this passage here, the passage that we read.

A lot happened from one week to the next in the life of Jesus and His disciples. And I'd like us just to think about this one week in the life of Jesus, this one week under three headings.

Because at the beginning of the week, we see confessing Jesus. And by the end of the week, we see camping with Jesus and committed to Jesus. So there's confessing Jesus, camping with Jesus, and committed to Jesus.

[3 : 52] Confessing Jesus, camping with Jesus, committed to Jesus. So first of all, confessing Jesus. Confessing Jesus. Now look there in verse 1. It says, So Matthew, the gospel writer, he introduces this extraordinary event in chapter 17 by connecting it to the events of the previous chapter.

Because we're told that it took place, it all took place six days after confessing Jesus. And so from one week to the next, a lot happened.

Because a week earlier, at the beginning of that week, you could say, or the previous week, Jesus and His disciples were told there in verse 13 of chapter 16, they were walking in the district of Caesarea Philippi.

And Jesus asked His disciples, as He spoke with them, He talked with them, and He asked them, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And the reason Jesus asked this question was because there was confusion. There was confusion among the crowds as to the identity of Jesus. And so the disciples, they explained to Jesus, they say that, some say, you're John the Baptist.

[5 : 12] Others say, you're Elijah, or Jeremiah, or just one of the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. There was confusion among the crowds. But as Jesus continued to walk with His disciples and talk with His disciples about their confusion, He probed them.

He probed the disciples by asking a very pointed and a very personal question. Who do you say that I am? Never mind what other people say about me.

Never mind what the crowds say about me. But who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?

And you know, it's one of the greatest questions in the gospel. One of the greatest questions. Because Jesus asks all of us the same question. He asks us that very pointed and very personal question.

Who do you say that I am? And like it was for these disciples, we need to answer that question ourselves. We need to answer this pointed and very personal question ourselves.

[6 : 24] And we need to think, well, am I like the crowds who are confused about the identity of Jesus? Am I like the crowds who were confused about the importance of committing my life to Jesus Christ?

Am I like the crowds who were confused about confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Or am I like Peter? Peter here, who came to the realization that there's no one else.

There's absolutely no one else to learn from or listen to or look to or love or live for apart from Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And so Jesus is asking us right from the outset of this passage this morning, who do you say that I am? Where do you stand with me? And have you taken that step of faith and commitment?

Have you confessed about Jesus like Peter did? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[7 : 33] And as you know yourself, and the sad thing is, many of you haven't made that confession. Many of you have not made that confession.

You have not come to Jesus or committed your life to Jesus or confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior. And yet I know you.

You know me. I know that you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. There's no doubt about that.

No question about that. You believe it in your heart, but you refuse to confess it with your mouth. Why is that? That's the question you need to ask yourself.

Why is it that it's so hard for you to confess openly and honestly to someone you know or someone you trust or someone you love? I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[8 : 34] I believe that He died for my sins. He's my Lord. He's my God. He's my Savior. He's my friend.

But instead, what I hear from so many of you is that you choose to confess you're not good enough, or you're not worthy enough, or you don't know enough, or you lack assurance of salvation.

And you make all these excuses. And that's what they are. They are excuses. And you say that some of you even say, salvation, well, it's personal. It's private. I don't want to say it to anybody. I don't want to talk about it to anyone. But, you know, I want to be as clear as I can be when I say this. If you lack assurance this morning, you lack assurance of salvation because you refuse to confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior.

You lack assurance of salvation because you refuse to confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior.

[9 : 39] Because the promise of the Bible, Romans 10, verse 9, the promise of the Bible is that if you believe in your heart, which you do, and you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, you shall be saved.

And so, my friend, salvation is not about just believing. It's also about confessing. It's about speaking.

It's about sharing what's going on inside. Because confessing with your mouth is not only an affirmation to others that you love the Lord and want to follow the Lord and you want to have Jesus as Lord.

It's also an assurance to you. It's an assurance to you that Jesus Christ is your Lord and He is your Savior and you want to follow Him.

You want to follow Him all the days of your life. And, you know, that's what Peter did. Peter believed in his heart and he then confessed with his mouth when he was asked the question, Who do you say that I am?

[10:49] He confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He affirmed the identity of Jesus and he was given assurance by Jesus.

He affirmed the identity of Jesus and he was given assurance by Jesus. Because Jesus goes on to say to him, verse 17, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

In other words, you have been blessed with the gift of salvation, the gift of eternal life. Not because your parents were Christians. Not because you were brought up in a Christian home.

Not because you'd come to church every single week of your life. No, you're blessed, says Jesus, because the grace of God is at work in your heart and in your life. And you have come to that point where you willingly believe it, all of it.

And you want to confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and your Savior. But you know, when Peter made his confession of faith, things didn't get easier for him.

[11:59] They actually got harder for him. Sometimes people think that when you become a Christian, when you make a confession of faith, it's going to get really easy. But that's not always the case. And it certainly wasn't the case for Peter.

Because when Peter made his confession of faith, you follow through the passage. When Peter made his confession of faith, we're told there in verse 21, that Jesus began to tell his disciples that he must suffer and be killed and then rise on the third day.

And, you know, Peter begins thinking, I've just made my confession as a Christian. I've just come out on the side of the Lord. And now Jesus is saying, I'm going to die. I'm going to leave you.

I'm going to rise on the third day. And Peter's thinking, well, that's not what I've signed up for. That's not what this was. This wasn't part of my plan. And so we read that Peter, he rejects and he even rebukes Jesus, saying, you see there, if you follow the passage, Peter took, verse 22, took him aside, began to rebuke Jesus, saying, far be it from you, Lord.

This shall never happen to you. Never happen to you. But immediately Jesus disciplines his disciple. He disciplines his disciple.

[13:14] He says to Peter, Peter, get behind me, Satan. Get behind me, Satan. You're a hindrance to me. You're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

Peter, look up. And Jesus, he lovingly disciplines his disciple. Jesus lovingly disciplines Peter in order to stress the importance of discipleship.

Because Jesus says then in verse 24, if anyone, you are included in the anyone. If anyone, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever, you are the whoever, whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what should it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Jesus explains the importance of discipleship. And that was at the beginning of the week.

[14:22] And one week to the next, it goes from Peter confessing Jesus to camping with Jesus. That's what we see secondly. Camping with Jesus.

So Peter is confessing Jesus, chapter 16. Then into chapter 17, he's camping with Jesus. Camping with Jesus. Look again at verse 1.

We read there that after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them. And his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

And so when Peter here, when he confessed his faith as a Christian, as a new disciple, as a new convert, he didn't expect to be disciplined and disciplined so quickly.

And undoubtedly, being disciplined by Jesus would have been a very deflating experience, a very humbling experience as a disciple, especially to hear Jesus say to you, get behind me, Satan.

[15:27] It's the last thing you'd want to be described as, as a Christian, as Satan. But it was a deflating experience. But like it is for us, discipleship, discipline, is good for us.

And like it is for Peter here, we're told that a week later, Jesus gave Peter this uplifting experience as a Christian. He was deflated, but Jesus lifted him up.

He gave him this mountaintop moment that he would never forget. A mountaintop moment that he would never forget. Because one week after confessing Jesus as Savior, we're told that Peter, alongside James and John, they were given this privilege of being led up a high mountain.

A mountain that we often nickname the Mount of Transfiguration. That wasn't the name of the mountain, but we often call it, or this experience, the Mount of Transfiguration.

Now, the location of the Mount of Transfiguration, it's been discussed and debated over the years. The traditional location was often thought to be Mount Tabor, which is located in the north of Israel, right to the north of Israel.

[16:39] It's near Galilee. It stands at about 1,800 feet. But most biblical scholars, they claim that the traditional location of Mount Tabor for the Transfiguration is incorrect because it's more than a six-day journey.

We're told there in verse 1, after six days. And six days earlier, they were in Caesarea Philippi. So it's more than a six-day journey away to go to Mount Tabor, where they had the Transfiguration.

And so the location of the Transfiguration, they've come up with lots of different ideas. Some think it was on Mount Zion, where the temple was situated. Others, the Mount of Olives, where Jesus was betrayed. Others, Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

But most view that it was Mount Hermon. It was on Mount Hermon. Because Mount Hermon, it's not only within a six-day journey from Caesarea Philippi, it's also the highest mountain in Israel.

It's over 7,300 feet tall, which fits in with what Matthew says there, right at the beginning. After six days, Jesus took them up a high mountain.

[17:50] So the Transfiguration took place on a high mountain. But, you know, I believe that the location of the Transfiguration was also on Mount Hermon for another reason. A reason we sang about earlier in Psalm 133.

Because Psalm 133 is all about the blessing of God through the unity of God's people. Psalm 133 is all about the blessing of God through the unity of God's people.

We sang the Sing Psalms version earlier. We're going to sing the Psalter version later on of Psalm 133, where David, the covenant king of Israel, he writes, I'm sure you know it so well, behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

David expresses and explains that the blessing of God is poured out on his people. The windows of heaven are opened and poured out upon his people when they come together in unity.

And the blessing of God, says David in Psalm 133, it's poured out like the Dew of Hermon. The Dew from Mount Hermon. That's what he says in the closing verse.

[19:06] As Hermon's Dew, the Dew that doth on Zion hills descend, for there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end. Now we're all familiar with Dew and that it falls like this invisible mist onto the ground while we're asleep.

But Hermon's Dew, it didn't fall like this invisible mist. Hermon's Dew fell like heavy rain. Similar to the rain we had earlier this morning.

It poured upon the ground. It saturated the ground of Mount Hermon. And that's what David is saying. He's saying the blessing of God is poured out upon his people when they come together in unity.

And it's like Hermon's Dew. It's like heavy rain poured down upon them, saturating them, filling them, filling them with the blessing of God.

But what's the blessing that God commands? Well, David tells us. It's life. Life that shall never end. Because he who has the Son has life.

[20:17] The blessing of God is eternal life. It's everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ. The blessing of God is life that shall never, ever end.

And you know, when we gather together in unity with one heart and one hope, one faith and one fellowship, one spirit and one salvation, the Bible tells us that's where the blessing is.

That's where the blessing is. And the blessing, say Psalm 133, it's like Hermon's Dew, falling like heavy rain, where the windows of heaven are opened.

And it's pouring down, saturating the worship of God as we sit under the Word of God, hearing, hearing the will of God.

And David says, there the blessing God commands. Life that shall never end. End. And you know, I look at Psalm 133, I believe that Psalm 133, it foreshadowed and foresaw what would take place on Mount Hermon when Jesus would be transfigured.

[21 : 27] Because when Jesus was transfigured, Peter, James, and John, they were given a glimpse of glory. Just a glimpse of glory. And the thing is, this glimpse of glory, it was so indescribable, so incomprehensible, that they could only say, there in verse 2, that Jesus' face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

It was indescribable. It was incomprehensible. It was like the sun. It was white as light. It was something they'd never seen before. It was a glimpse of glory.

And you know, the amazing thing is, that it would have been even brighter for them. Because when they were on the top of Mount Hermon, this extraordinary event, it took place in the darkness of night.

That's what we're told. Luke tells us in his gospel, that they went to Mount Hermon to pray. That was the purpose of their visit. But as usual, whenever the disciples were asked to pray, they were flagging, they were falling asleep, just like ourselves.

Because we often excuse, we accept ourselves from prayer, or the prayer meeting, because we're too tired, we're flagging, we're falling asleep. But as soon as the disciples witnessed the glimpse of glory, and Jesus transfigured before them, we're told that they wake up.

[22 : 54] They wake up because they're in the presence of the Lord. They see the beauty and the glory of Jesus, and they're no longer falling asleep. They're fully awake. Because they not only see Jesus transfigured, they not only see him like the sun and as white as light, they also see two other figures.

They see Moses and Elijah. And people often ask the question, how did they know it was Moses and Elijah? How will we know each other in heaven? All these questions are raised because of this, but they knew it was them.

Why? Because of the unity of God's people. They knew who they were. It's a beautiful image of unity.

And as you know, Moses, he was a key figure in the Old Testament. We studied him in the book of Exodus. He was the leader of the Israelites. He was the lawgiver of God's people. And there's Elijah, the passionate prophet of the Old Testament, who called down fire from heaven in order to demonstrate and display the Lord, that the Lord, he is God.

And together in unity, Moses and Elijah are there with this transfigured Jesus. And together, Moses and Elijah, they represent the law and the prophets.

[24 : 13] They represent the whole of the Old Testament, the Old Covenant. But what's remarkable is that as they appear in this glimpse of glory, they're all in union with Jesus.

They're all in union with Christ because Jesus is the one who came to fulfill it all. He didn't come to abolish the law. He came to fulfill the law and the prophets in the New Testament, in this new covenant.

And, you know, you look at it and you think, this glimpse of glory, it's no wonder David wrote, as Hermon's Jew, the Jew that doth on Zion hills descend, for there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end.

And Peter is here. He's seeing it all before his eyes. And, you know, what he says, verse 4, he says to Jesus, Lord, it's good that we're here.

It's good that we're here. And if you wish, I will make three tents, three tabernacles here, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.

[25 : 22] Peter, as a disciple, he had been so deflated, so downcast, so disheartened because he had been disciplined by Jesus. He had been described like Satan. And yet when he sees this glimpse of glory, he says, Lord, this is amazing.

This is extraordinary. This is heavenly. I've never experienced this before. Lord, it's good for us to be here. And don't you just love Peter? He's so real.

He's so relatable. And for Peter, this glimpse of heavenly glory, it was so good. It was so glorious for him that he didn't want to go home. He didn't want to go home because he asks, can we not stay here?

Can we not just camp here? Can we not just build three tents for you, one for you and one for Moses, one for Elijah? I'll make the tents. I'll build them. Can we just stay here where we are?

I don't want to go home. I don't want to go back. Because this is where the blessing of God is. This is a glimpse of glory. This is a foretaste of what's to come. This is where Hermon's Jew is being poured out.

[26 : 27] This is where God commands the blessing of life that shall never end. Lord, it's good. And it's good for us to be here. I don't want to go home. I don't want to go back.

Can we not just camp here, Jesus? And once again, Peter is silenced. He was silenced by the Son. And now he's silenced by the Father twice in one week.

Because we're told in verse 5, while he was still speaking, 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. Peter is silenced by the Father. And the Father is one who not only commands the blessing, he confirms the blessing.

And he says that the blessing is all in the Son. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

[27 : 32] Listen to him. Listen to him. This is my beloved Son. That brings us lastly and briefly to consider committed to Jesus.

So at the beginning of the week, Peter is confessing Jesus. Then he's camping with Jesus. Now he's wanting to be committed to Jesus. Committed to Jesus.

Look at verse 6. When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, Rise and have no fear.

And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. You know, the amazing thing is, Peter, James, and John, they weren't the only disciples to ever experience and enjoy a mountaintop moment and this glimpse of God's glory.

Long before this extraordinary event of the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah, you'll remember that they also had their mountaintop moment.

[28 : 37] They had a mountaintop moment when they were like Peter, when they were deflated and downcast as disciples. Moses had his mountaintop moment just after the Israelites had built a golden calf and broken God's law.

And Elijah had his mountaintop moment when he was depressed and downcast after the spiritual state of the nation of Israel. And yet in these mountaintop moments, each and every one, with Moses and Elijah and the disciples, the Lord preached a sermon.

The Lord revealed himself to his people. The Lord preached a sermon to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai. On the same mountain, the Lord spoke to Elijah, not in the fire or the wind or the earthquake, but in a still, small voice.

And both Moses and Elijah, they left their mountaintop moment with this renewed commitment to serving the Lord. And that was the same with the disciples.

They were downcast. They were confused. They were deflated about their discipleship. But when they had their mountaintop moment with Jesus, they were made to see, verse 8, no one but Jesus only.

[29 : 50] They saw none other save Jesus only. They were made to focus and fixate themselves upon Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

They were committed to Jesus. As I know what we're called to be, we say it so often, we're to be committed to Jesus in our Christian character, conduct, and conversation.

We're to be committed to Jesus in our energy, our effort, and our enthusiasm. We're to be committed to Jesus in our work, our witness, and our worship. We're to be committed to Jesus in our time, our talents, and our treasure.

My friend, we're to be committed to Jesus in every area, avenue, and aspect of our lives. Because if Jesus is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all.

And you know, as much as we may want to carry on camping with Jesus in our mountaintop moment, we need to come down the mount and stay committed to Jesus.

[31 : 00] We need to stay committed to Jesus. And you know, I find this, I suppose, relevant for everybody who was at camp. Coming back from camp, you have Camp Blues.

Because being at a camp is like being in a bubble. It's this bubble of blessing. You're there all week long. You're involved in the work of God. You're surrounded by the Word of God.

You're taking part in the worship of God. It's a bubble of blessing that you don't want to end. Just like Peter. You want to be like Peter and say, Lord, it's good for us to be here.

I don't want it to end. I don't want to go home. I don't want to go back. I want to carry on camping with Jesus on the mountaintop. But you know, we often get these other mountaintop experiences, mountaintop moments, not only at camp.

We often get it during a communion season. You get it going to a conference. I often get it when I go to Keswick. Even during revival, you don't want it to end.

[31 : 59] Sometimes, maybe even in church, you don't want it to end. There are some who look at their watch, but there are others who don't want it to end.

You don't want it to end. You want to carry on camping with Jesus on the mountaintop. But as Jesus reminded his disciples, we can't. We can't stay on the mountaintop.

These mountaintop moments are there to refresh us and renew us in our commitment to Jesus. They're there so that we seek and strive to love the Lord more deeply, to follow the Lord more closely, and to serve the Lord more faithfully.

These mountaintop moments are there for our benefit, for our blessing, so that we will keep on learning, and keep on looking, and keep on listening, and keep on loving, and keep on living for Jesus.

These mountaintop moments are there so that we realize our need for commitment to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

[33 : 06] And so you look at Peter, you look at the disciples, a lot can happen in a week. From one week to the next, the disciples are confessing Jesus, camping with Jesus, and committed to Jesus.

And as we go into a new week, that's what we're called to be too. We're called to be committed to Jesus as we go into another new week in life's journey.

And I hope and pray that this week and every week will be a good week of being committed to Jesus, to loving Him and looking to Him and listening to Him and living for Him as the author and the finisher of our faith.

But may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. And let us pray. Father in heaven, we give thanks to Thee this morning. We thank Thee, O Lord, for reminding us that Jesus is Thy beloved Son, in whom Thou art well pleased.

We thank Thee, O Lord, that He is the one who died in our place. He reveals to us His glory. And not only His glory, His gospel of salvation.

[34 : 22] And help us, we pray, to confess with Peter that Jesus is the Christ. He's the Son of the living God. He's the one we want to love and look to and live for day by day.

And Lord, we know that we faint and fail, but we are those who are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Uphold us then, Lord, we ask. Keep us by Thy grace and by Thy power that we would do all to Thy glory and the furtherance of Thy kingdom.

For we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning. We're going to sing those words of Psalm 133.

Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter, page 424. Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter, page 424.

We're singing the whole psalm. Just a reminder that there's tea and coffee after the service, so you're welcome to stay behind if you can for a cup of tea or coffee. Psalm 133, Behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

[35 : 39] And then the last verse, as Hermon's Jew, the Jew that doth, on Zion hills descend, for there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end. The whole psalm to God's praise.

Amen. Behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well, together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

In unity to dwell. In unity to dwell.

Together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

Like precious oil bent on the head that down appeared it all.

[37 : 10] For thy things to dwell.

go. Dead of his garments go. Dead of his garments go.

Even it on spirit unto the skirts. Dead of his garments go.

As Hermon's Jew that Jew that doth on Zion hills descend.

For there the blessing God commands life that shall never end.

[38 : 29] Life that shall never end. Life that shall never end.

For there the blessing God commands life that shall never end.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. For ill love it.
Here is theúic one