

Jesus alone

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let's return to our reading in Luke's Gospel in chapter 9 for a few moments, and we can consider words that we find in verse 36.

We could maybe read verses 34 to 36 first of all, again. As he was saying these things, that's what Peter was saying, A cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to Him.

And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

I want us just to consider the events that we have here, but especially in connection with what we find in verse 36, the words in verse 36 at the end of the first sentence there, Jesus was found alone.

[1 : 10] We are, of course, here in the subject of the transfiguration this evening, that's recorded for us by Luke, here in the middle of chapter 9 in verses 28 to 36.

It marks for us a significant and special moment in the Gospel narrative, and it displays itself as something that lays hold of our attention in different ways.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this event, underline for us the importance of what is occurring here and what is recorded for us.

It is in our own thinking and in our own minds a special moment of revelation, a revelation of who the Lord is.

It comes to us in its own particular context, as we'll touch on in a moment, but we understand that our Lord has come in the reality of what the Incarnation says to us of His humiliation.

[2 : 18] Paul, of course, speaks of this in terms in Philippians chapter 2, where it speaks of the manner in which Jesus is displayed there as the one who has humbled Himself, and that He has taken the form of the servant.

And we see this as we ourselves examine what the Gospel writers record for us. Our Lord taking the form of human flesh, the form of the servant.

And yet here we have Him on this mountain, in this moment of the revelation of His glory. It is for Peter, James, and John, verse 28, to be those who receive this vision, and those who themselves are the recipients of this particular privilege, the first-hand experience, the first-hand witness.

Peter, of course, refers to this later in his own writings, and he says there that they were eyewitnesses to His majesty. And there he pictures what he was, the eyewitness, and he pictures, too, what he saw, the majesty of the Son, the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It left the deepest of impressions upon him, and leaves an impression upon us, too, reminding us here, in the midst of the Gospel record for us, of the greatness of what occurs here.

[3 : 49] And as we think and consider of the transfiguration, we are coming to verse 36, where we see the transfiguration coming to its end, the revelation of His majesty and glory coming to its end.

And there, in verse 36, Jesus alone. Now, as we come to the end of this experience, what we are seeing here is what immediately follows.

Peter, James, and John, alone with the Lord, alone with Jesus. And in its simplicity, that that brings to us a highly instructive lesson in the Christian life, that our faith is exercised on Jesus alone.

We confess that we are too often distracted away from this fundamental principle of our faith. We're recalled to look to Him alone, to trust in Him alone, to put our faith solely upon the Lord.

How easy we are distracted, and how easy we need to remind ourselves time again and time again, it is Jesus alone. And I want us to think in this regard this evening, as we come here in verse 36 to the end of the experience, and to think of the disciples, Peter, James, and John, here alone with Jesus.

[5 : 27] And to think of what this means, to be alone, to be alone with Jesus in this regard. First of all, alone, in that everything else is gone.

All the different experiences and phenomena that are part of the transfiguration. All I've left. When we come to read of the transfiguration, it is Luke who is able to instruct us that in verse 28, they went up on the mountain to pray.

The reason for the journey up onto this mountain was that the Lord was wanting to pray and that He was taking with Him Peter, James, and John. This was His purpose. It reminds us, of course, too, here, of the deep connection that there is between this event and the event in the Garden of Gethsemane with the same disciples and the same purpose to pray.

And also, the manner, too, in which we find the disciples there and here, heavy with sleep. And also, of course, the reality of the heavenly visitation coming to strengthen the Lord.

And it all comes as part of the same movement, the same journey, the same trajectory. It is all towards Calvary.

[6 : 57] It's all taking us to the cross. And the whole concept of our Lord praying in this manner and praying in the garden in this way is in order to prepare Himself and to anticipate what is before Him.

We see that this has been spoken to us in the context as well. In verse 22, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be killed on the third day.

He used to be raised. In verse 51 also, we have this. His face is set to Jerusalem. His face is set to the Father's will, to Calvary, to Golgotha, to His death.

So, Jesus has gone and taken with Him this inner circle, these three disciples, Peter and the sons of Sebedee. And they went on the mountain to pray.

And whilst on the mountain, in verse 29, while He was praying, whilst He is interacting in this way with God the Father, while He is engaging in this manner in prayer to heaven, here on earth, His appearance was altered.

[8 : 14] His clothing like dazzling white. Here is a manifestation of His glory.

Matthew tells us that His face shone like the sun, His clothes white as light. In Mark's description, he says that His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach.

And this is the demonstration of His glory. And it is for us a unique experience in the days of His humiliation. Through His incarnation, the Word has become flesh.

He dwelt among us. He walked in this way. The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief took the form of the servant, humbled himself, engaged in this manner in this way. But here is a unique moment and a unique day in this experience.

And with this, in verse 30, there are heavenly visitors, Moses and Elijah. And also, what we read in verse 34, there is a cloud and overshadowed them.

[9 : 36] They're enveloped by the cloud. They were afraid, verse 34, as they entered the cloud.

And then in verse 35, a voice came out of the cloud, this is my son. These are all parts of the phenomena of the experience of our Lord's transfiguration, of the demonstration of His majesty and His glory before Peter, James, and John.

all these things are occurring and happening on this mountain. Then they're all gone. It all ends.

And all that is left is Jesus, Peter, James, and John.

And from the perspective of Peter, James, and John, in the reality of this encounter they have just had, they come now and it is just Him.

It is just Him. That's all they see and all they hear. Moses and Elijah, verse 30, they'd gone.

[10 : 59] Here were two of the great prophets, two of the greatest prophets. In fact, the recognition here of Moses and Elijah coming is how they represent the law in the case of Moses and Elijah in the case of the prophets.

Moses himself as the one who is the mediator of the law, who himself went up to Mount Sinai. Here is Moses, who on one occasion as Israel themselves, the children of Israel themselves, were engaged in rebellion and sin against the Lord, how He comes again to the Lord and He says to the Lord, let me see Your glory.

And Moses is declaring in that moment that his absolute commitment and focus is God and he wants more of God and he wants the glory of God to be revealed to him.

This is the same Moses who never entered the promised land physically himself, but who was buried there at the very border and was received in his soul into heaven.

And with him is Elijah. He didn't call in the same way as Moses did to see the glory of God, but what he did do was that he was there in that moment and he heard the still, small voice.

[12:23] He heard God revealing Himself to him. and his departure is different to Moses' in the whirlwind, in the chariots.

He leaves this world and he enters into heaven. He enters into the glory of God. And here now on this day, in this moment, on the mountain of transfiguration, these two men have come from heaven.

Their souls made perfect in holiness and they come from that place now glorified and they speak with Jesus in verse 30 on the mountain.

They were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory in their holiness and they spoke.

They spoke with Jesus and they spoke to him in verse 31 of his departure or his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

[13:27] This is the death of Jesus. This is what they're talking about. They're talking about his work and his accomplishment, the achievement of what he is to do, the reality of the one who is able to bring his people into heaven.

In verse 32, Peter and the disciples begin to arouse. They're seeing these things, they're seeing the two men in verse 33. They're about to depart and so Peter has to try and stop this.

He wants to prolong this moment. He wants to keep them there. He says, we'll build tents. They can stay here. We can stay here with them. He wants to remain in this moment.

The moment is so particular, so special, so wonderful, so unique, he doesn't want it to end. but they go.

Moses and Elijah are gone. And the cloud, the cloud is spoken of in verse 34. A cloud has come.

[14:34] It overshadows them. They're entering into the cloud. They're terrified of this cloud.

They're terrified of the experience. terrified of the encounter of the glory.

Meeting with God. Of encountering the experience of the revelation of the glory. The cloud, of course, is something we're very familiar with in the Old Testament.

The cloud of glory that entered into the tabernacle. Displaying to the people of God of God's presence. God with them. God in His holiness there.

And communicating here to us again the reality in this moment of the transfiguration, the majesty and glory of our Lord. And the cloud is gone.

There was a voice in verse 35. The voice spoke. It is a voice of God the Father. It is a voice that was heard in Luke's Gospel in chapter 3 and in verse 2 at the baptism.

[15:54] Sorry, and further on in verse 22 in chapter 3. You are my beloved son. The voice came from heaven and said this, With you I am well pleased.

Affirming who the son is. Affirming the pleasure of the Father. Now in verse 35 of chapter 9. This is my son. This is who he is. He is my chosen one.

Listen to him. A citation of Deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 15. The affirmation and the call of God the Father that they would listen to the son. It is the voice of God speaking to them.

When they entered into the cloud they were afraid Luke says. Matthew says in chapter 17 and in verses 5 and 6 that when God spoke in this way they fell on their faces and they were terrified.

This is an overwhelming experience. The cloud enveloping them. The voice leaving them in terror on their faces on the ground and it's all coming to its end.

[17:09] It began with a light. The light itself also is gone. The light comes in verse 29.

His appearance is altered. His clothing became dazzling white. From the beginning of the gospel we're told of the humble estate that the Lord took for himself.

Born of the virgin in a poor family sojourning in this world. No place that was to lay his head. He was a man who displayed himself in his humility because he demonstrated that he was a servant.

He came to serve. He was clothed in that humility. Clothed as a servant. But for one moment for one moment in his journey for one moment in these days his glory is visible.

His glory is visible as a bright piercing powerful light. It's in his face. It's in his clothing.

[18:18] It's in everything he is as they look at him. At Sinai Moses came back down with his face shining and the people couldn't look upon him but they knew that he had been with God but here is Jesus and his whole person is illuminating in this way in this bright piercing light like the sun.

You can't look at the sun. It will blind in you. It's too brilliant. And here he is in the manner that it has occurred in verse 29 as he was praying as he was communing with the Father as he was praying to God the Father but then it's gone.

The light stops. All the elements that convey the phenomena of this supernatural experience they're all gone.

How often we want to see the phenomena. How often we want to see the dramatic.

How often we want to see God at work in a mighty and powerful way. How often we look for this.

But it's quite different to what the Lord calls us to.

[19 : 51] When he says that we're to walk by faith and not by sight. How unusual this kind of experience was even for the disciples.

Even for Peter, James, and John. Could we even cope with it? They're unready to receive it.

In verse 32 we are told they were heavy with sleep. In verse 37 we're told it's the next day it's late at night they're heavy with sleep and they're terrified by the encounter that they receive and their faces are on the ground.

And this overwhelming experience that has come upon them it is over in an instant. it ends and they are alone with Jesus.

Alone with Jesus all has left. Secondly, alone to suffer.

[21 : 04] To suffer the Lord has come. His glory is veiled by his humiliation. Veiled in that manner and that way he humbled himself.

He took the form of a servant. Why? So he could suffer because it was the Father's will to crush him.

He was to be put to death and he must suffer alone. And the loneliest thing that a person will ever do is to die.

He must die alone. He must go to that cross alone. They must scatter from him when he is arrested.

He must face the high priest and the Sanhedrin. He must face Pilate alone. He must carry his cross.

He must go to Golgotha.

[22 : 10] He must be nailed on that cross alone. And on that cross he must cry out his loneliness.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

On the cross crying the cry of the dereliction, he must suffer alone. He must suffer alone.

But this moment is a moment on his journey to the cross. And it is a moment of encouragement.

Just like Gethsemane, there in agony in Gethsemane, and we're told in Luke's gospel in chapter 22 that an angel came and strengthened him.

In the midst of his agony and the anticipation of the dereliction and the anguish and pain and wrath of God, a word from heaven to strengthen him.

Just as we have here two who have come from heaven to give a word to strengthen him, to speak to him of his departure, to tell of the new exodus, to tell how he'll take us over the river, how he'll take us home, how he prepares the place for us in the Father's house, and that he will come for us, who marches us to heaven.

[23 : 43] This is what he does. But he must do it in this lonely way and manner, on the cross.

On the cross. And what we have here is this sense of identity that this chapter is trying to emphasize and impress upon us.

Verse 20, who do you say I am? And Peter said, the Christ of God. And then he responds in verse 22, so the Son of Man must suffer many things, be killed, and on the third day raised.

He speaks of his work. Verse 44, let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.

He has come for this purpose, to suffer alone. He has come, and his calling calls him to go into the darkness, down the mountain.

[25 : 01] He speaks even here in this manner. They want to stay there, to build tents there, but he insists that they go down. And when they go down, verse 42, there is a boy coming to him with a demon throwing him to the ground.

Comes to the darkness, into the darkness, and the isolation. Because in that place, he is to achieve what he cannot achieve on the hilltop.

He must go to the cross. He must move closer and closer to Calvary. And as he does, he is praying to the Father. And the Father in this moment, on the mountain, grants this moment of recognition and encouragement.

In verse 35, this is my son. This is my son. But he has come for a work.

He has come to humble himself. He has come to pour himself out unto death. He has come to give himself to the task and to the work, to suffer alone.

[26 : 22] Thirdly, alone, so that they see these three disciples. They are here in verse 36, when everything has gone and they found Jesus alone.

Matthew, of course, uses that beautiful language. When they lifted their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. This is their vision. This is their sight.

When they lift their eyes, when they pick themselves up from the ground, it's him. It's him they see. It's him they're focused on.

It's him they're looking at. After everything they've experienced, all this powerful phenomena after phenomena, what they saw, what they heard, what they experienced, what they felt, in a moment, engaging in the reality of that heavenly glory, and then it ends.

Back down to earth. The phenomena is over. This activity is over. And they find themselves on that mountain after all this is gone, looking to Jesus.

[27 : 48] Just him. That fundamental lesson of the life of faith, as he has said it to them in verse 23 just prior to this, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me, follow me.

This is the call and invitation of the gospel, to see Jesus. There are so many things in life that will distract you, will try to take you away.

Jesus says you need to deny yourself, you need to stop yourself being distracted, you need to be aware of the devil of temptation, of all that goes on in this world, and you need to stay focused on Jesus.

He's saying to us, leave everything behind. Follow me. Live the new life, the new way, because if we're able to understand and realize and see who he really is, it's going to be worth it.

Every day, every moment, every sacrifice we make, it will all be worth it if we see him only.

[29 : 14] The question that is threaded through this section is the question of our understanding of who Jesus is. You remember in chapter 8, there is the storm on the sea.

And in verse 24, he rebukes the wind and he brings calm to the storm. And he said to them, where is your faith?

And they are marveling and they are saying, who is this? Who is this that even the wind and water obey him?

This question of identity continues in chapter 9. Herod said, John I beheaded. But who is this? Who is this?

This is the question that Jesus himself asks the disciples in verse 20. Who do you say that I am?

[30 : 20] And Peter said, you are the Christ of God. That is a confession of faith. We come at this time of year in our communion and we confess our faith, taking our place at the table, partaking of the elements, and saying, this is for me.

He did this for me. But it is a confession of our faith. And Jesus is going on in this section in verse 23, if anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and he's saying, you have to live out your confession.

And this is how we know that we have seen him. And listen to him.

Verse 35, this is my son, my chosen one. Listen to him. The world is trying to distract us.

Sometimes to our shame, it is able to do that. It entices us in different ways. We're diverted. We're listening to others.

[31 : 39] We're not listening to him. They're on a hill, alone, on a mountain, just with Jesus. They have got back to that moment of reality and the challenge of faith to focus on him, on him.

He's everything. A Christian, doesn't your heart beat for him? Isn't it all for him? Do you not sing with the psalmist that his love is better than life?

Is your Savior not everything to you? Do you not want to focus on him alone? Do you not want to stay committed to him?

Do you not want to be obedient to the one who calls you to leave everything, to deny self, to take up your cross, to follow him? Do you not want to see Jesus only?

Do you not want to stay committed to him? Do you not want to ensure that you never leave him? Because he never leaves you.

[32 : 57] He is the good shepherd. He is here for you. He is committed to take you home. you hear his voice.

You follow him. You follow him. You are in an audience of one. Other shepherds come, and the sheep do not recognize these voices.

You are in an audience of one. One shepherd. One voice. one Lord of heaven and earth who wants our all.

He wants our all. When everything else is gone, and the phenomena has ended, and the overwhelming experience comes to its end, they are alone with him.

And they find the most important and essential lesson of all. Our need to focus on him. That this is faith.

[34 : 15] This is life. This is what it is to be a Christian, to follow him, to hear his voice, and to see Jesus only.

May the Lord bless our thoughts together. let's pray together. Gracious God, we give thanks to you for your word and for its teaching and instruction for us. We pray that you would encourage us and help us to walk in the way that our shepherd calls us to, with our focus and our desire and longing for him alone.

Bless us then, we pray, and forgive us our sins. In Jesus' name, amen. Our concluding item of praise is from Psalm 89, as we have it on page 345.

Psalm 89 at verse 15. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know, in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, and in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high, because the glory of their strength that only stand in thee, and in thy favour shall their horn and power exalted be.

[35 : 43] We're going to stand to sing these words, and then we'll close with a benediction. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know, joy.

In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

In thy name shall o'm shall o'er joy exceeding me, and in thy para righteousness shall they exalt be on high because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee and in thy favour shall our heart and our exalted be now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

Amen Amen