**Matthew 17:1-9 February 23rd, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from the Gospel of Matthew the 17th chapter here re-reading these words. “And 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.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

While many events in life may begin with a bang, and end with a whimper, the Epiphany season begins with a star shining in the sky and ends with the Son of God radiant and beaming on a mountain. As this season of revelation draws to a close, we join with Jesus, Peter, James, and John and come up the mountain to see the radiant glory of The Son of God revealed to us. For this morning we too, as God’s own children, even blessed to see the family of God grow before our very eyes in the baptism of Carly Ebeling, we too as students of the greatest teacher who ever lived Jesus Christ, come up a hill of our own, to this beautiful church, to see Jesus revealed to us, in all of his glory. Epiphany does not end with a whimper, it does not go away and fade out like a candle that is just about gone, it’s not discarded like old Christmas wrapping paper, or an empty box of chocolates from Valentine’s Day, it blazes in its final glory, like a flame that is doused with gasoline. Christ’s divinity is revealed here in these final moments of the season of revelation, because soon, we will go down from the mountain. Soon our comfortable clothes will be replaced with itchy sackcloth. Soon, our foreheads will be blackened with ash, and the season of repentance will begin. Soon, and very very soon, Lent will be upon us.

It is not a coincidence that right before we go into this season of contrition, where the Alleluias are muted until Easter morning, that we turn our eyes to the mount of Transfiguration. Because this is the final revelation. While we have seen Christ in many and various ways already this Church Year, and in this Epiphany season as the teacher, the healer, and most importantly the Son of God, it is one thing to hear about it, and another to see it. So now we, on our journey, with the disciples, behold the truth before our very eyes.

Throughout Jesus ministry He had healed diseases, He had taught with authority, He had driven demons out of the possessed and done many other miraculous signs in front of the disciples. But even in the midst of all the glory they had beheld, nothing solidified the fact that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, like His transfiguration before their eyes. To be transfigured comes from the Greek word that we derive “metamorphosis” from. The transfiguration was a metamorphosis of Jesus Christ. But the truth is, this was not a magical “changing” of who Jesus really was before the eyes of the disciples. This was simply, a revealing of the divine nature of the Son of God who was born of a woman yet conceived by the Holy Spirit. While the disciples had been with Jesus throughout his entire ministry, and seen his humanity in the fact that He grew tired, that He ate, drank, slept, laughed, and experienced all of the other emotions and temptations that all human beings do, this was the revelation of His divine nature. This was the moment when their eyes were fully opened to the amazing, omnipotent, pure and holy nature of Jesus Christ as the second person of the Holy Trinity, and the Son of God. For right before them his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white, as light. This is what John was talking about when He writes in John chapter 1, “We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.” John was an eyewitness of that glory, he beheld the Son of God radiating from the mountain as the light of the world.

But they still didn’t get it. The disciples, in the presence of Jesus Christ in all His glory, and the heroes of the faith, Moses and Elijah, still did not grasp the full weight of what this Epiphany season is all about. They still did not truly understand who Jesus was, and why He came. Because, in the presence of Jesus and Moses, and Elijah, Peter speaks for the other disciples saying, “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 sees all three standing before him and thinks that it would be appropriate to create worship dwellings for all three on an equal level. He takes Jesus Christ, fully revealed in His glory, and puts him on the same level as Elijah and Moses, who were sinful servants of the Lord.

Jesus Christ was revealed to His disciples, yet they could not grasp the full weight of who He was. Jesus Christ is revealed to us this morning, and we fail to recognize His Will for our lives. We live in an amazing time, and we have amazing opportunities in our lives to influence those around us and show them the light of God in our hearts through what we say, and what we do. Yet we still, don’t grasp the full weight of who Jesus is, and why He came. Because if we recognized our need for a Savior, nothing would keep us from coming to His house to worship. If we recognized our sinfulness, and how far we have fallen from grace, we would cling to God’s Word and its revelation of the Messiah who saves us from our sin. And we would never put anything on the same level of Jesus Christ. While Peter made the mistake of equating Moses, and Elijah and Jesus all on the same level of holiness, we don’t put heroes of the faith up against the Son of God. We put ourselves. We put our idols. We put our sin, and the pet sins that we enjoy doing. We put our money, our possessions, our comfort and our happiness up on the same level of Jesus Christ because at the center of what we do, is not a submission to God’s Word and His Will, but a love of ourselves.

God’s voice set the disciples straight. In Peter’s confusion, He had compared Moses, Elijah and Jesus all as the same, and immediately, as it says here in Matthew 17 “As Peter was still speaking” a cloud overshowed them and God’s voice boomed from that cloud saying “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” If there was ever any doubt of who Jesus was, here is the final say, God the Father, the creator of the world paints a clear picture for the disciples and for us. And He imperatively tells them to “listen”. Stop attempting to know everything and listen. Stop turning to your own intelligence, your own thoughts, your own intentions and desires, and simply, listen. Because upon hearing the words of God, the disciples fell down and were terrified. They were in the presence of a God who hates and shows his wrath against sin. Revealed to them was the power of the Most High and they could not stand. And neither can we. In the moments when we think that we have all the answers to the universe and that our knowledge and assumptions are the only answers to the questions of this world, we are humbled. We are brought low. We are reminded by God in His Word that we are children of a fallen creation and poor miserable sinners. We cannot save ourselves from His wrath, and His wrath is great. We need a Savior.

That’s why God points to Jesus. “Listen to him”. That’s why Jesus comes to the disciples, touches them and says “Rise, and have no fear.” He restores them. And He restores us. Jesus Christ was transfigured before their eyes and they beheld His glory. And so do we. We behold His majesty and holiness in their testimony. We behold it in their words, and we believe that it happened as they say, because these words are not their own but the inspired words of the Holy Spirit. The Bible, reveals to us His glory and His divinity. The Bible reveals to us, Jesus Christ.

And Christ’s divine revelation in the Transfiguration, is the final picture of Jesus that we see in Epiphany, before we take that first step on the road to the cross. Because just as we can look from the steps of Trinity Lutheran Church and see through the trees the beauty of the Lake, from the Mount of Transfiguration another hill was off in the distance. Another mountain where three crosses will be placed in the ground. From this mountain, and this last moment of revelation, we see the Son of God’s glory, and know that He is able to do, what He came to do. He is able to free us from our ego, from our sin, and our shame. He is able to die on our behalf and take our sins to the cross, because He is the Son of God. And waiting for Him, is the cross. Waiting for him is pain, and torment. While here on the Mount of Transfiguration his clothes are white and his face is lifted up and shining like the Sun, we soon will be preparing ourselves for the moment when His clothes, are stripped off of his body. Where his clothes are red with the blood from his back where they have whipped and scourged him almost to death. And instead of a walk up and down a hill where he enjoys the company of his disciples, he struggles to carry the weight of a cross, as he is led through the streets on a death march. We will soon go from this Mountain of glory, to the Mountain of Death, where his face does not shine, but it is bloody and looking down upon the people. Yet the same glory, is there. And in that moment, when He is dying with all of the marks of his humanity for all to see, from the blood and the pain and the thirst, He still looks upon us with love and mercy. He still sees us and does not turn His anger upon us. Instead he prays for us. Instead He dies for us.

The cross waits in the distance. And the season of revelation has come to an end. God himself has revealed to us the true nature of His Son whom He has sent to us in order to save us. Listen to him. Study His word. Come to him in confession for the moments when you think that you have all the answers. Come to him in submission to His Will, with the knowledge that He provides and cares for all your needs. And receive from Him, his very own body and blood for your forgiveness. Receive from Him, through the faith created in your hearts in the waters of Holy Baptism, forgiveness from all of your wrongs. Receive from him the evidence of His love, won for you on the cross through his torment and pain. For we are standing upon a holy mountain, and we are made His holy people, through his precious blood.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.