

The Transfiguration of Our Lord (2018)

Mark 9:2–9 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. *And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.* And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

In the Name of Jesus.

THOSE are TWO different things, my dear ones!
‘This is My Son!’ AND----- ‘Listen to Him!’

My ‘feelings Doctor’ must be doing some good for me. Because all week long, while I was reading about the Transfiguration, I couldn’t keep from smiling and chuckling and shaking my head and sounding off in prayer

and thanksgiving to Our Father and Our Spirit for Our Jesus.

The IMPUDENCE! While poor Peter, James and John are terrified by the cloud and the voice and the bright shiny-ness of Jesus; and while Peter babbles on about something or another—your poor preacher can't stop the joy!

So if the Holy Spirit can find a home with ME—no one is left out!

Because the Father is in such a pickle! He surrounds Jesus with ALL of the Old Testament: the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah—as if they are somewhat like those game-show models or ladies at the car-shows standing at either side of the Big Prize, gesturing with hand and smiles away from THEM to HIM! (When we meet Moses and Elijah today, I'll have them tell y'all that they're FINE with that comparison!)

And the Father shine-ies up His Son all bright and everything; VERY impressive. And then, His Spirit speaks the Gospel, the same sort of thing we heard at the Baptism of Our Lord, 'This is My beloved Son.' (Back then, He added how pleased He was with This Son.)

But God can't 'hep His-self!' And it's NOT because He is what HE is—it MUST be because WE are what WE are. He just HASTA give an order: 'Listen to Him!' They're on a mountain, like old Sinai; and the Sinai pros are there, Moses and Elijah. And it's all bright and scary. And so, God just HASTA blurt out some LAW.

Imagine how HARD it is to BE God! And He doesn't even WORK at it!

What in the world does He want us to do now? What Israel did way back when? 'Sure, God; whatever Moses said, WE will listen to him and do!' Yeah! Worked out great!

Yes, Father in heaven—we'll get right on that 'listening to Jesus' business.'

'But you see, dear Father in heaven: while WE are impressing YOU with how well WE listen to the King you have set over us—howzabout YOU point to Him, and tell of HIM, and DELIVER HIM, and GIVE...US...HIM?! ALL that YOU can expect from US is some kind-of PERFORMANCE by which WE can JUDGE ourselves, and others, and compare and contrast—and guess who's going to come out ahead on THAT deal? So, it's all YOUR

JOB to wrap up EVERYTHING that is bright and shiny and DEMANDING AND TERRIFYING about YOU—and YET come to us and rule over us and stay with us: IN...YOUR...SON. YOU said it! THIS is YOUR...BELOVED...SON! And ALL that WE can OFFER to you: is HIM!’

My dear ones: Thank God For Our Baptism Into Christ! An anointing, just DECLARING that WE are well-pleasing to heaven above too, as a gift, without checking in first with who’s doing what, and doing it different, doing it better. No: as if when the King was nailed up in disgrace and mocked until He screamed and died in pain, THAT MAN—Heaven called it quits on looking toward ANY...OTHER...MAN to fulfill...anything.

‘Listen to Him!’ ‘You go it, God! We’ll get right on that! But YOUR part of the deal is to Love Jesus, to be pleased with Him, and to tell THAT Good News to ALL! We’ll do OUR part, as long as YOU do YOURS!’

Saint Paul wrote that the Jews of his day would not commune with him and those glad about what the Father says about His Son, because they are satisfied with Moses; but the poor people cannot SEE Moses for what Moses is: a catastrophe!

I've lived this out two ways recently.

One: I didn't even get out of my house this morning without totally ignoring Christ and my Baptism; and so, making some clever remark about those who sin against the ones I love. My friends: I am probably even RIGHT about my observation, and the hurt that others cause my family. Just as I am certain that when you blurt out your hurt feelings about others, there is most likely something there. Let's not hide from that!

But, you see, THAT is the whole POINT of the revelation of Jesus in bright, scary light—and the Voice from the Cloud That is God saying, THIS ONE!, THIS ONE!, THIS ONE! HE is the One I love!

Because only HE can bear the weight; the weight of a cross-beam; and what more? We cannot begin to fathom.

For the only hope those who sin AGAINST us have—is NOT OUR great patience, that one day, we pray, THEY will perform as WE demand; or even as HEAVEN demands, Moses demands, undsoweiter.

The ONLY HOPE the next man has of being acceptable to heaven or earth, God or...(God or us!!!! Ha!

THERE's an UNEQUAL yoking! But, what WE do to men IS...WHAT...GOD...DOES to men!)

Their only hope of being harmless, uncharged, un-indicted, unashamed, not-judge—but so much more: accepted, loved, embraced, flooded with goodwill—

Their only hope is this:

And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Jesus only; Jesus only; Jesus only. The Father cannot get enough of HIM!

Praise...the...Lord!

The second time I tried to lift the veil of Moses was in my Hebrew class at the University. When we were reading Psalm 2, there's this terrifying stuff about the Lord above 'laughing at, mocking, holding men in derision' for their sins. And I asked the class how many of them were terrified like ME at such a revelation.

Not one! Smiles all around the seminar table!

And when I asked the question, the humanities question: How am I supposed to love such a God—Who sees me do wrong and harm only myself, and then Who not only LAUGHS at me, but calls over all the heavenly host to point at me and sneer and giggle and mock in my pain and woe? HOW do I LOVE such a God?!

And the smiling answer I got back: ‘With all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind!’ I axed a Moses question; they guv me a Moses answer. And I SO wanted to grab the curtain cords and swing back the drapes covering their eyes; but that’s not my job in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

The Holy Spirit has called you, me, and all disciples by the Gospel, to confess our LIE—that we BOAST that we will listen to Moses, OR to Jesus; and then we live as we live, and poor men are terrified when they see you coming toward them; especially religious types like ME!—

THAT is OUR part in our religion. But cheer up! For OUR part is not INTENDED to please our God and Father above! THAT...is His part, our King, our Lord, our Christ, our Brother: Jesus, and Jesus Alone!

So that even though WE blind ourselves to the TRUE demands of Moses to whatever degree—that's when WE thunder and lightning and terrify others just because THEY are EXACTLY like us, sinners!—

Still, The MAN Whom heaven cannot get OFF of, cannot get enough of—LOVES—

Gives us today to eat and to drink, His Body and His Blood.

And I'm gonna start chuckling again!

For the Lord Jesus Himself uses Moses-type words—as if it's the only language we know. But HOW He charges and raises to life words of death and demand: 'Take, eat; take, drink; do this!'

Lemme speak to the King of heaven on behalf of us all, my friends:

'You got it, Lord! WE will take and eat and drink and do! BUT YOU need to pardon even all of THAT! YOUR

JOB is to be Who YOU are: the Man Our Father cannot pull away from; the Man Our Spirit cannot stop inspiring; the MAN Who is coming, soon, to take away all our terror!’

It’s as if That Day has already arrived, my dear Christian friends: when in the midst of the next man harming us, somehow, by the merciful Holy Spirit, IN US, the next poor man sees—despite what HE can produce—

THIS...IS...MY...SON...MY...BELOVED. This is your King! And all of heaven cannot get enough of HIM!

‘Listen to Him,’ my dear ones.

Doctor Luther called the EAR the perfect organ of faith. For ALL it can do is RECEIVE!

Receive your dear Father and His Full Spirit in the Name of Jesus! Amen!