

The Life of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: The Transfiguration: A Glimpse of Glory

Matthew 17:1-13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson brings the class to the mountain of transfiguration, where the hidden glory of Christ is briefly unveiled. The doctrinal heart is the deity and supremacy of Christ. For a few moments the disciples see the eternal glory that had been veiled beneath His ordinary humanity: His face shining like the sun, His garments white as light. This is not a borrowed, reflected glory like the fading glow on Moses' face (Exodus 34); it shines from within, for Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3). The Father's voice confirms His deity, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," and adds the decisive command, "listen to him." When the vision fades, the disciples see Jesus only. Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, have done their work of pointing to Him; now He stands supreme as God's final and fullest word.

A second doctrinal thread is the joining of glory and the cross, which comes to a head at Question 9. Even on the mountain of glory, the conversation concerns His departure, His coming death at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31), and Jesus charges the disciples to keep the vision quiet until after His resurrection. The glimpse of glory is given, in part, to prepare them for the scandal of His suffering. The beloved Son who shines with divine radiance is the same Son who must go to the cross. Help the class see that the glory does not cancel the cross, and the cross does not diminish the glory; in Christ they belong together.

Formationally, this passage calls us to a fresh vision of Christ's glory that breaks through our dull familiarity, to follow Him down from the mountain and even toward the cross rather than clinging to spiritual highs, and above all to obey the Father's command to listen to His Son. It also teaches us to come to Christ with both reverent awe, falling on our faces, and confident assurance, as He touches us and says, "Have no fear." Press the class toward the one response the Father commands: listen to Him.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Matthew 17:1-2, Jesus is transfigured before the disciples, His face shining like the sun and His clothes becoming white as light. What does this unveiling of glory reveal about who Jesus truly is beneath the ordinary appearance of His earthly life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Set the scene against the backdrop of the whole Gospel so far. For three years the disciples have seen Jesus mostly in His ordinary humanity, tired, hungry, weeping, sleeping. His glory has been

veiled. On the mountain, for a few moments, the veil is drawn back and they see Him as He truly is: His face shining like the sun, His clothes white as light.

Stress the source of the light. This is crucial for understanding what is revealed. Moses' face once shone after he had been in God's presence, but that was a borrowed, reflected, fading glory (Exodus 34:29–35). The glory of Jesus shines from within Him. It is His own. The transfiguration does not give Jesus a glory He lacked; it unveils the glory He has always possessed as the eternal Son.

Draw the conclusion about His identity. Beneath the ordinary surface of the carpenter from Nazareth is the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3). The man the disciples had followed along dusty roads is God the Son, veiled in flesh. The transfiguration is a window into the deity that the incarnation had hidden.

Lead toward worship and assurance. The disciples needed to know, and we need to know, that the One we follow is no mere teacher but the glorious Son of God. This sight steadies faith, especially when the road grows dark, as it soon would. Let the class behold, with the disciples, the hidden glory of Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unveiling of Christ's divine glory, hidden beneath His humanity
- The glory shining from within Christ, not borrowed like Moses' (Exodus 34)
- Jesus as the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3)
- The transfiguration as a window into the deity veiled by the incarnation

Discussion Prompts

- What is revealed about Jesus when the veil of His ordinary appearance is drawn back?
- How does the source of His light differ from the glow on Moses' face?
- How does seeing His hidden glory steady our faith?

Question 2

Student Question:

For a moment the disciples saw the glory that had been hidden in plain sight all along. Where has your own sight of Jesus grown dull through familiarity, and what would it mean to seek a fresh vision of His glory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question addresses the dullness that long familiarity can breed. The disciples had walked with Jesus daily, and even they needed this fresh sight of His glory. How much more do we, who can grow so accustomed to the things of Christ that we no longer marvel at them.

Help the class recognize the symptoms of dullness. The Bible can become a familiar text we no longer expect to be moved by; worship can become routine; the gospel itself can feel like old news. None of this means Christ has grown less glorious; it means our sight has grown dim. Familiarity is a subtle thief of wonder.

Point the way toward fresh vision. We cannot transfigure ourselves, but we can put ourselves in the way of seeing: lingering over the Scriptures that show His glory, asking God to open our eyes, coming to worship expectant rather than routine. Paul says that as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are transformed (2 Corinthians 3:18). Invite each person to name where their sight of Jesus has grown dull and one way they will seek a fresh glimpse of His glory this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Dullness toward Christ bred by long familiarity
- Familiarity as a thief of wonder
- Seeking a fresh vision of Christ's glory through the word and worship
- Being transformed by beholding His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Discussion Prompts

- Where has your sight of Jesus grown dull through familiarity?
- What are the signs that wonder has faded?
- What would help you seek a fresh vision of His glory this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, appeared and spoke with Jesus about His coming departure at Jerusalem (compare Luke 9:31). What does their presence and their conversation teach us about how the whole Old Testament points to Christ and His death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Identify who Moses and Elijah are in the symbolism of the scene. Moses is the great lawgiver, representing the Law; Elijah is the foremost of the prophets, representing the Prophets. Together they stand for the whole Old Testament. Their appearance with Jesus shows the Law and the Prophets in conversation with the One they had always anticipated.

Draw out the significance of the conversation. Luke tells us they spoke of His departure, His exodus, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem, that is, His death and the redemption it would bring. Even the great figures of the old covenant are pointing toward the cross. The whole of the Old Testament finds its goal in Christ and supremely in His saving death.

Show how this shapes our reading of Scripture. Jesus Himself taught that Moses and the Prophets spoke of Him (Luke 24:27, 44). The transfiguration dramatizes this truth: the Law and

the Prophets do not stand on their own; they lead to Christ. To read the Old Testament rightly is to see how it prepares for and points to Him.

Note the harmony of glory and cross even here. The figures of glory speak of His death. This prepares the way for Question 9, where we will hold the two together. For now, let the class see that the whole sweep of God's revelation converges on Christ and His cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moses and Elijah representing the Law and the Prophets
- The whole Old Testament pointing to Christ and His saving death
- The conversation about His departure, His coming death at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31)
- Reading the Old Testament as preparation for and witness to Christ (Luke 24:27, 44)

Discussion Prompts

- Whom do Moses and Elijah represent, and why is their presence significant?
- What does it mean that they spoke of Jesus' coming death?
- How should this shape the way we read the Old Testament?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter wanted to build three shelters and stay on the mountain, holding onto the glorious moment. Where are you tempted to cling to spiritual high points rather than follow Jesus back down into the valley, the ordinary, and even the hard road He calls you to walk?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Treat Peter gently, as the text does. His impulse is understandable and even sincere; the moment was glorious, and he wanted to preserve it. But his plan to build three shelters and remain misunderstands the moment. The glory was not given so they could camp on the mountain, but to strengthen them for the descent and the road to the cross.

Name the temptation in ourselves. We, too, can want to live on the mountaintop, chasing spiritual highs, retreats, peak experiences, while resisting the ordinary faithfulness of the valley and the hard obedience of the road Jesus actually calls us to walk. There is nothing wrong with the mountain; the error is wanting to stay there rather than follow Christ down.

Point to the pattern of discipleship. Immediately after the transfiguration, Jesus and the three descend to a valley full of need and to a journey that leads to Jerusalem. The glory equips for the valley; it does not replace it. The genuine fruit of a mountaintop experience is not a desire to stay but renewed strength to follow Christ wherever He leads. Invite each person to name where they are tempted to cling to spiritual highs rather than follow Jesus into the ordinary and the hard.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to cling to spiritual high points
- Mountaintop experiences given to strengthen us for the valley
- Following Christ down into the ordinary and the hard road
- The fruit of true experience: renewed strength to follow, not a desire to stay

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to cling to spiritual highs rather than follow Jesus down?
- What is the right purpose of a mountaintop experience?
- What valley or hard road is Jesus calling you to walk right now?

Question 5

Student Question:

From the bright cloud the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (v. 5). What does this declaration reveal about the deity of Christ and about the authority of His word?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Connect this voice to the voice at the baptism. The Father had said the same words at the Jordan, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," and here He adds three more, "listen to him." The repetition underscores the Father's own testimony to who Jesus is. The deity of Christ is not merely inferred by the disciples; it is declared by the Father from heaven.

Draw out what "my beloved Son" affirms. This is the language of unique relationship and shared nature. Jesus is not a son of God in the way believers are adopted children; He is the Son, eternally beloved, of one nature with the Father. The voice from the cloud is the Father's endorsement of the glory the disciples have just seen.

Focus on the added command, "listen to him," and its weight. The Father commands that His Son be heard and heeded. This places the authority of Christ's word above every other voice, including those of Moses and Elijah standing right there. To listen to Jesus is to obey God; His word carries the authority of God Himself. We will develop His supremacy further at Question 7.

Lead toward submission. The right response to the Father's declaration is to bow before the Son and to listen to Him. The transfiguration is not given merely to amaze but to direct: behold the glorious Son, and listen to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Father's own testimony to the deity of Christ
- "My beloved Son" as unique relationship and shared nature

- The supreme authority of Christ's word: "listen to him"
- Listening to Jesus as obeying God Himself

Discussion Prompts

- How does the Father's voice confirm the glory the disciples saw?
- What does "my beloved Son" affirm about Jesus' relationship to the Father?
- Why does "listen to him" place Christ's word above every other voice?

Question 6

Student Question:

The Father's command was simple: "listen to him." Honestly, whose voices most shape your daily decisions, and where do you need to listen to Christ above the competing voices of culture, fear, or your own desires?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question makes the Father's command personal. We are surrounded by voices competing for our attention and obedience: the voice of culture, of advertising, of social media, of our own fears and desires, of the opinions of others. The Father commands that, above all these, we listen to His Son.

Help the class take honest inventory. Whose voices actually shape their daily decisions about money, time, relationships, ambitions, and reactions? Often the loudest voices, not the truest, win the day. Naming the competing voices is the first step toward subordinating them to Christ.

Move toward concrete listening. To listen to Christ is more than to hear; it is to heed and obey. It means letting His word, in Scripture, carry more weight than the other voices when they conflict. Invite each person to identify one area where a competing voice has been drowning out Christ, and one concrete way they will listen to Him there this week. Listening to Jesus is the central command of the mountain, and it is meant to be obeyed in the valley.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The many voices competing for our obedience
- Taking honest inventory of which voices shape our decisions
- Listening to Christ as heeding and obeying, not merely hearing
- Letting Christ's word outweigh competing voices when they conflict

Discussion Prompts

- Whose voices most shape your daily decisions?
- Where do competing voices most often drown out Christ?
- What is one area where you will listen to Him above them this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

After the voice spoke, the disciples lifted their eyes and saw “Jesus only” (v. 8); Moses and Elijah were gone. What does this teach us about the supremacy of Christ over the Law and the Prophets, and about His being God’s final and fullest word to us (compare Hebrews 1:1–3)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Let the detail preach: when the voice had spoken, the disciples saw Jesus only. Moses and Elijah, who had appeared in glory, are gone. The honored servants step aside, and the Son remains alone. This is not a slight to Moses and Elijah; it is the proper ordering of things. They were witnesses pointing to Christ, and when He is fully revealed, they yield to Him.

Draw out the supremacy of Christ. Jesus is greater than the Law and the Prophets, not because they were unimportant, but because He is their fulfillment and goal. The Law was given through Moses; the prophets spoke God’s word; but Christ is the Word, the Son, to whom they all pointed. To see Jesus only is to recognize that He stands supreme over the entire old covenant.

Connect this to Hebrews 1:1–3. God, who spoke long ago in many ways through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, who is the radiance of His glory. Christ is God’s final and fullest word. We do not look beyond Him for some further revelation, nor do we set the old covenant alongside Him as an equal authority. He is the climax and completion of all God’s speaking.

Apply it to faith and practice. Because Christ is supreme and God’s final word, we listen to Him above all and find in Him the fulfillment of everything the Law and the Prophets promised. This guards against both neglecting Christ for lesser authorities and expecting some new word beyond Him. He is enough; He is supreme; we see Jesus only.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The supremacy of Christ over the Law and the Prophets
- Moses and Elijah yielding to the Son they pointed toward
- Christ as God’s final and fullest word (Hebrews 1:1–3)
- Not looking beyond Christ for further revelation, nor setting rivals beside Him

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of the disciples seeing “Jesus only”?
- How is Christ supreme over the Law and the Prophets without dishonoring them?
- What does it mean that Christ is God’s final and fullest word to us?

Question 8

Student Question:

When the disciples heard the voice they fell on their faces in terror, but Jesus came, touched them, and said, "Rise, and have no fear" (vv. 6-7). What does this teach us about coming to Christ with both reverent awe and confident assurance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hold together the two responses the text gives us. First, the disciples fall on their faces in terror at the voice of God. This is the right response of creatures before the holy presence of God: reverent awe, even fear. We should not lose this. To draw near to God is to draw near to the One before whom angels veil their faces.

Then notice what Jesus does. He comes to them, touches them, and says, "Rise, and have no fear." The same glorious Son before whom they trembled stoops to comfort them with a touch and a word. The holiness that humbles them is joined to a tenderness that lifts them up. They need not be paralyzed by terror, because the One who is glorious is also gracious.

Apply this to how we come to Christ. Some approach God with such familiarity that they lose all reverence; others are so weighed down by His holiness that they cannot come to Him with confidence. The transfiguration teaches both together: we come with reverent awe, knowing whose presence we are in, and with confident assurance, because Christ Himself bids us rise and not fear.

Bring it to the gospel. The reason we can come to the holy God without being undone is Christ, who reaches out, touches us, and speaks peace. Reverence and assurance meet in Him. Encourage the class to cultivate both, neither a casual irreverence nor a cowering dread, but the worship of those who fear God rightly and rest in His grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Reverent awe as the fitting response to God's holy presence
- The tenderness of Christ who touches and reassures
- Holding together reverence and confident assurance
- Christ as the reason we can come to the holy God without fear

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the disciples fall on their faces, and why was that right?
- What does Jesus' touch and word add to their awe?
- Do you tend to lack reverence or lack assurance, and how does this scene correct it?

Question 9**Student Question:**

Jesus told the disciples to tell no one of the vision until after He had been raised from the dead (v. 9), and the conversation on the mountain concerned His coming death. Why does Scripture hold the glory of Christ and the cross of Christ together, how does this glimpse of glory prepare the disciples for His suffering, and what does it mean that the beloved Son revealed in radiance is the same Son who must go to the cross?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and its theme is the union of glory and the cross. Begin with the striking fact that even on the mountain of glory, the subject is His death. Moses and Elijah speak of His departure at Jerusalem, and Jesus charges the disciples to keep the vision quiet until after His resurrection. Glory and cross are woven together from the start.

Explain why the glimpse of glory was given when it was. Jesus had just begun to teach plainly that He must suffer, be killed, and be raised, and the disciples were shaken and resistant. The transfiguration strengthens them for what is coming. They needed to see, even briefly, that the One heading toward apparent defeat is in fact the glorious Son of God. When the darkness of the cross fell, this memory of light would steady them.

Hold the two truths together carefully, for people tend to want one without the other. Some want a glorious Christ without a suffering one, a Savior who only dazzles and never bleeds. Others can lose the glory in the grief of the cross. Scripture refuses both errors. The beloved Son revealed in radiance is the very same Son who must go to Jerusalem and die. His glory does not exempt Him from the cross; rather, He goes to the cross as the glorious Son, and the cross itself becomes the place where His glory is most fully displayed in self-giving love. The resurrection then vindicates both.

Bring it to the disciples' situation and ours. The instruction to wait until after the resurrection shows that the full meaning of the glory could only be grasped on the far side of the cross and the empty tomb. We, who stand after the resurrection, can see what they could not yet see: that the path of the beloved Son ran through suffering to glory, and that this is the pattern for His followers too. We behold His glory, we follow Him to and through the cross, and we await the glory yet to be revealed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The union of Christ's glory and His cross in Scripture
- The glimpse of glory given to prepare the disciples for His suffering
- The same beloved Son revealed in radiance going to the cross
- The cross as the place where Christ's self-giving glory is most fully displayed
- The resurrection as vindication of both glory and cross
- The pattern of suffering then glory for Christ's followers

Discussion Prompts

- Why does even the mountain of glory turn the conversation to His death?
- How would this glimpse of glory have strengthened the disciples for the cross?
- What error do we fall into if we want the glory of Christ without His cross, or the reverse?

Question 10

Student Question:

The Father's command, "listen to him," still stands over every follower of Jesus. Looking back over this lesson, name one specific area where you sense Christ speaking, and one concrete way you will listen to Him and obey this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone returns to the central command of the mountain: listen to Him. The whole vision drives to this point. Help the class move from beholding the glory of Christ to obeying the voice of Christ, which is the response the Father commands.

Invite specificity. Ask each person to name one area where they sense Christ speaking to them, perhaps through a passage of Scripture, a conviction that surfaced in this lesson, or a long-resisted command. Then ask for one concrete way they will listen and obey this week. Listening that never becomes obedience is not the listening the Father commands.

Close by joining glory and obedience. The Christ we are commanded to obey is the glorious, beloved Son of God, supreme over all, God's final word to us. To listen to Him is not a burden but the privilege of heeding the One whose face shines like the sun. Encourage the class to write down the area and the concrete step, and to come down from this lesson as the disciples came down from the mountain, ready to listen to Him and follow Him toward whatever He calls them to.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from beholding Christ's glory to obeying His voice
- Identifying where Christ is specifically speaking to us
- Listening that becomes concrete obedience
- The privilege of heeding the glorious, beloved Son

Discussion Prompts

- In what specific area do you sense Christ speaking to you right now?
- What is one concrete way you will listen to Him and obey this week?
- How does remembering His glory make obeying Him a privilege rather than a burden?