

The Life of Christ

Lesson 10: The Transfiguration: A Glimpse of Glory -- Matthew 17:1-13

For three years the disciples had walked beside a man who looked, for the most part, like any other man. He grew tired and hungry. He wept at a grave and slept in a boat. His glory was veiled behind ordinary flesh, hidden in plain sight. They had begun to believe He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, but believing it and seeing it are two different things. And then, on a high mountain, for a few astonishing moments, the veil was pulled back.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain, and there He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became dazzling white, white as light itself. This was no reflected glory borrowed from outside, like the glow on Moses' face after he had been with God. This light came from within Him. For one trembling moment the three disciples saw what had been true all along: that the man they had been following is the radiance of the glory of God, the eternal Son, blazing with a brightness that had only been waiting beneath the surface.

And He was not alone. Moses and Elijah appeared, talking with Him, the great lawgiver and the great prophet, the two pillars of the Old Testament, standing in conversation with the One to whom the whole of the Law and the Prophets had been pointing. Luke tells us they spoke of His departure, His coming death at Jerusalem. Even here, in the blaze of glory, the cross is in view. Peter, overwhelmed and not knowing what to say, blurts out a plan to build three shelters and stay. But a bright cloud overshadows them, and from the cloud comes a voice, the same voice that had spoken at the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Listen to him. With those words the Father settles the matter. Moses and Elijah are honored servants, but they fall silent, and when the disciples lift their eyes, they see Jesus only. He is greater than the Law and the Prophets; He is their fulfillment and their goal. This lesson invites us up the mountain to catch a glimpse of who Jesus truly is, beneath the ordinary surface of the One who walked the dusty roads of Galilee, so that we, like the disciples, will come down ready to listen to Him and follow Him, even when the road leads toward a cross.

Group Discussion: On the mountain, the Father's voice gave one central command about Jesus: "listen to him." Why do you think that, of all the things the Father could have said, He commanded the disciples to listen to His Son, and what does that tell us about the place Jesus should hold in our lives?

Personal Reflection: For a few moments the disciples saw the hidden glory of Christ, and it changed how they saw everything else. Where has your vision of Jesus grown dull or familiar, and what might it look like to ask God for a fresh glimpse of His glory this week?

Read Matthew 17:1-13

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. 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?
7. 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)?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 2 Peter 1:16–18, where Peter recalls being an eyewitness of Christ's majesty and hearing the voice on the holy mountain; Exodus 34:29–35, where Moses' face shone with a reflected, fading glory, in contrast to the glory that shone from within Christ; Hebrews 1:1–3, where God, who once spoke through the prophets, has now spoken by His Son, the radiance of His glory; Deuteronomy 18:15, the promise of a prophet like Moses to whom the people must listen; 2 Corinthians 3:18, where beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into His image.