Matthew 17:2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.

This moment in the life of Jesus is always so absolutely fascinating. But before we speak of what happened to Jesus, let’s just talk about the disciples and what they saw for a moment.

Three of the twelve disciples of Jesus were permitted to accompany Jesus on this rather extraordinary excursion. Note that this event takes place, to the best of our calculations, ninth months before Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time at Passover where he will then meet the fate that God has in store for him. It is also interesting to note that Matthew and Mark time the event from the teaching of Jesus concerning his suffering, death and resurrection and Luke times it based on the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! There is no report of jealousy or hurt feelings from the nine that were not permitted to go. They may simply have relished the day to relax and get some extra rest considering the fast pace of life in following Jesus.

There are those who like to ask why these three and not others? We usually assume because they were closest to Jesus. I believe it was because these three had the most need for this event. Peter, though he had confessed Jesus as Lord, almost immediately put himself in the way of the work of Jesus by his statement that Jesus should never be arrested and crucified! And remember that Peter is the disciple who is going to deny Jesus at the trial. Peter definitely needed the lesson here. John is the only disciple who sticks by Jesus during the whole trial and crucifixion. It is to John that Jesus will turn over the care of his mother. John will be persecuted for his faith and will be the longest lived disciple. I think John too needed the extra care in faith. And James? James needed the extra care because it is clear that James becomes the leader of the Church in Jerusalem where once persecution breaks out a strong and sure faith in the leader will be needed. That’s just my speculation but it seems to make sense.

So these three get to see something none of the others do. They get to see Moses and Elijah, the greatest prophets that ever existed. How did they know who these men were? My guess is divine revelation. When you are in the very presence of the glory of God, I think God can give you the knowledge you need to grasp what you are seeing and hearing. Please note that Luke makes mention of the fact that Moses and Elijah are discussing with Jesus his upcoming departure when he reaches Jerusalem. Yes, they are talking about the coming death of Jesus and no doubt the victory that will come with that event. Again, think of Peter and his denial that Jesus should suffer and die. This is just what he needed to hear. And what is revealed in that discussion is clearly again what James and John needed to continue in their ministries.

I also find it interesting that Peter’s reaction to this event is one that causes him to shoot off his mouth. He talks about putting up three booths, three shrines, I guess, to the men and this event. Do you get the feeling that Peter, who didn’t know what he was saying, still wants to make religion and faith a “see it, touch it, experience it” thing. Jesus puts the end to that way of thinking as they are headed down the mountain and all of them are forbidden to speak of these events until after the resurrection.

All in all, the event of the Transfiguration of Jesus is an amazing one, one designed to teach us and yet also designed to lead us to confidence in God our Savior. Our theme will be: **THE LESSON OF THE TRANSFIGURATION. 1st. What happens. 2nd. What it means! 3rd. What it means for us!**

The truth of the matter is that most of us here are very familiar with the events that take place on this high mountain with Jesus. Jesus had taken these three disciples with him, not only for the strengthening of their faith but also to serve as witnesses to this event in the future. I like the simple narrative that is used. They went up on a high mountain and then Jesus was transfigured! Simple, straight forward. No mumbo jumbo, no rituals performed and none of this “we have to do something in order to make ourselves worthy of this moment” thing. Jesus is simply transfigured before them.

What happens with Jesus? Our text lays it out so simply, **“His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.”** When you look at the other two Gospels that report this event, each man puts the phenomena into his own words. Mark says, **“His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.”** Luke says, **“The appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightening.”** And what of Peter? He also gives us his reaction. We heard it in our Epistle reading: **“We told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ…we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”**

What happened is that the true nature of Jesus is revealed to these three men. In other words, for a moment, (actually we have no idea how long this transfiguration lasted, but I suspect much longer than we think!) it was not Jesus in a state of humiliation before them, but rather this was Jesus revealed as the **“fullness of the deity in bodily form.”** And if anything, doesn’t it strike you as all the more awesome when you hear this: **“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them.”** Any and every Jew knew from Scripture that this bright cloud was the “Glory of the Lord” and who knows when that wonder of God was last seen! The Bright cloud, the blazing light spectacle was how God the Father had shown himself in the past to his people. Yet, I don’t want to spend time speaking of this “Glory of the Lord” from the Old Testament other than to point out to you that it blazed with light, it glowed and was so bright you couldn’t look into it. It is God’s clear way of helping the disciples and us understand that He and Jesus are the same! Let that sink in. These disciples, and you and I, are witnesses of the fact that Jesus is fully and totally God in every way!

And that’s the meaning behind this event. That we should grasp and understand that Jesus is God’s Son and as such, Jesus is our Redeemer and Savior from sin. For the most part, the power and majesty, the glory of Jesus has remained hidden, clothed in his human body and life. But as the time for Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice of the world gets closer, even as Jesus begins to teach his disciples about the coming events of his Passion, we see the Lord God, both Father and Son work together to give a demonstration of the full glory and awe that Jesus is. Jesus is just like the Father in glory and honor. Jesus is just like the Father in power and wisdom. In other words, for this small group and eventually for all who would believe in Jesus, God allows this transfiguration that we might truly grasp that Jesus and the Father are indeed One. One in the very essence of Godhood! One in power and majesty. And, we can conclude, one in purpose in the saving of mankind from sin.

In one beautiful moment, God the Father has demonstrated that Jesus is God. Completely, totally and awesomely God! I like that fact that God does not do this for the whole world to see, but here has only three witnesses to this event. Two or three witnesses is what God’s Law says is the minimum number of witnesses to establish something as true! These three men, will later on report what they saw and heard, and the Christian church will accept their testimony and witness as accurate and true. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who is fully and majestically God! That’s the lesson, but note that the lesson is also built on faith.

I say it is built on faith because you must believe the witnesses rather than have your own experience. That means we are to believe the Word of God. Think of what Peter reveals to us in his Epistle. He says, **“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And you have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it.”** Peter grasps that the truth and marvel of Jesus is founded on God’s Word, both Old and New Testaments. Peter understands that future generations will need the trustworthiness and accuracy of the Bible because all faith is going to be based on what you hear in that Word! That is the whole issue of faith. To believe what God has revealed. To believe what God has done as He has told you. To so trust God that His Spirit’s witness in the Bible is believed as fully and absolutely true! If you want to believe, then be in the Word and then we are told the Holy Spirit will work in your heart and mind to call you and keep you in the truth faith of Jesus.

There is no doubt that Peter clearly understood the point and meaning of this transfiguration of Jesus. The question for us is whether we get the point or not?

Do we grasp that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Do we understand that in Jesus we have the fullness of God in bodily form? The importance of this is foundational to all we know and believe!

Because if you don’t believe Jesus the Christ, then you don’t have a Savior. If you don’t believe that Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for sin, that He paid for our sins and that the proof of this is his resurrection from the dead, you don’t have a Savior. If you don’t have confidence and trust that God’s Word, given by the Holy Spirit of God, is the complete and Godly truth in everything, then you don’t have a Savior. Either Jesus is everything or He is nothing. Either Jesus is God or He is nothing. Either Jesus is the Word, the full revelation and power behind the Holy Bible or He is nothing! You don’t get to pick and choose what you want to believe. You don’t get to tell God how it is going to be. It is God who reveals all to us and tells us how it will be! Yes,   
dear people, it really is an all or nothing issue when it comes to faith.

If you really want to have that lesson driven home, then let me direct your attention once again to the fact that God the Father spoke from the Majestic Glory that surrounded the disciples. You heard earlier what He said, but I left one little line out. Yes, God affirms Jesus is his Son. Yes, God declares his love for Jesus and the holiness of Jesus in his Words. And then God puts all of it into focus. He says, **“Listen to Him!”** You can say this is an invitation or encouragement, but I personally think this is straight forward, resonating and absolute command! God commands we listen to Jesus! The awe and power of that moment and that command caused the disciples to fall facedown to the ground in terror! These men grasped and understood the importance, awesomeness and don’t mess with Him point of this command. Jesus is to be listened to!

Now, if you want, you can ignore all of this. You can decide to slice and dice, to snip and clip at the Word of God until it suits your fancy and desires, but me, I believe Jesus the Christ, the Son of God and our Savior from sin. I believe every jot and tittle of the Bible to be God’s Word and the revelation of our redemption in Jesus. I believe we are to LISTEN! I believe we are to take to heart! I believe the Word of Jesus, the Bible, from beginning to end is the basis of our faith. That is what God is getting across to us in the transfiguration. It is a lesson we can ill afford to ignore! Jesus is God! Jesus is the Savior! Listen to Him! Amen.