

Sermon for the Transfiguration of our Lord

The Text: Matthew 17:1-9

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

Have you ever imagined what life must have been like for Jesus first disciples? Today I want us to close our eyes and picture ourselves as one of Jesus' first disciples.

He chooses us and says: "Come follow me!"

He shows us eternal love and grace - a perspective on life that we had never experienced before. ...

He keeps on encouraging us and nurturing us.

He leads us to see the big picture of life – to discover **his** Heavenly Father as **our** kind and loving Heavenly Father who has created us and keeps us every day.

Yes, we saw what he did – the miracles and healings. On one occasion he said: *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12)*

And no, we didn't like it when Jesus spoke about how he would suffer and die and on the third day rise again! We were fearful about the unknown and all that we couldn't see or understand.

But then six days after Jesus had spoken to us about his pending death, he took us and two more of his closest disciples up on a mountain by himself. And there while on the mountain we saw the big picture in such a way that we could see Jesus at the centre of everything and in all his glory –just like God the heavenly father sees Jesus.

We see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus – Moses and Elijah were two of the great prophets of the Old Testament that spoke to the people on behalf of God – calling the people back to God. These prophets made it clear that a sacrifice needed to be made in order for us to be made right with God.

And there Jesus appearance changed before us: His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as pure light – Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah – Jesus who would soon be crucified as the perfect sacrifice to take away the sin of the world **appeared** in all his heavenly glory before us.

Something changed that day for us.

We experienced something special!

And we wanted to enjoy and savour that moment.

And to top it all off - while we were expressing our joy in the moment, a bright cloud surrounded us.

A voice from the cloud said: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When we heard this, we were terrified. We fell with our faces to the ground. But Jesus came and touched us. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When we looked up, we saw no one except Jesus.

In that moment, we received a revelation of who Jesus is. We saw God's big picture. We saw that Jesus is at the centre of God's plan. Jesus is the one who had come from God to set people free from sin and fear and death – so that we can be all he created us to be. Jesus is the one who has come to fulfill God's plan of salvation.

OK open your eyes!

Friends, how amazing it must have been to be up on the mountain - to see the big picture revealed.

Seeing the big picture – seeing reality through the lens of Jesus gives us a confidence that is not easily shaken.

That is until we go through trials on our own.

For example, Peter was normally very confident but when Jesus was on trial - Peter's confidence was shaken and he denied knowing Jesus three times.

In reality, being confident in God's big picture is not easy to maintain on our own. We need others to help us stay focused on the big picture.

By helping each other, we get to enjoy the gifts that God has prepared for us. We get to see what others see which we cannot see on our own. We get to gain perspective that would otherwise be hidden from us.

Today in our gospel reading, Jesus helped the disciples see God's big picture up on the mountain. Jesus helped them see what would otherwise remain hidden from them.

For us today, God's big picture is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. At first look the book may seem rather intimidating.

But something happens when we minister to each other with the Holy Scriptures – we can help each other to see the big picture of God's plan for salvation as written in them. We help each other understand the meaning together. Our eyes are opened – we are filled with a joy and a peace which equips us to enjoy and share the gifts God has given us – even the gifts we cannot see at first glance.

We all need help to see more clearly – and we can help each other as we minister to each other with the words and pictures of the scriptures:

spoken, prayed, sung and enacted. We can help each other see God's big picture more clearly.

In some of our Lutheran churches prayer ministry is provided for worshippers. People are invited to go to a person to be prayed for individually, either according to a prayer request or as the prayer person is led to pray.

Often God gives these prayer people a scripture to share with the person being prayed for. Many who receive prayer ministry with scripture will speak of how their confidence in God's big picture is renewed as the word of God is personally spoken over them as they are prayed for.

This is a ministry we can provide to each other. It is simply personally communicating God's promises from the scriptures to each other in prayer. With these means God is at work to renew and strengthen our confidence in Christ and his unbreakable love.

Some of us have our own testimony of people praying God's word over us and can share stories of how our confidence in God's big picture was strengthened through such personal ministry!

Another great way of helping each other grow in confidence in God's big picture is to practice 'Dwelling in the word' together. 'Dwelling in the word' involves:

1. Praying for the Spirit's discernment,
2. Slowly listening to a passage of scripture being read,
3. Quietly sitting with the text, and then
4. Sharing with one other person what we noticed in the scripture.
5. We then come together as a group and share with the group what we heard our partner say.
6. We then ask, so what is God saying to us today?

Through listening to each other share what we have noticed, we can help each other see the big picture!

Church groups who practice 'dwelling in the Word' regularly speak of how it equips them to minister to each other and participate in God's mission.

Let's continue to help each other grow to see God's big picture – God helps us see his big picture when we humbly minister to each other with God's Holy Word. So imagine ministry in our congregation whereby we would pray God's promises over one another and those who come to us asking for prayer. Imagine the creative work God could do as we, in faith, speak God's creative word over each other in prayer! As James 5:16 says: "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Imagine ministry in our congregation if we took the time to 'dwell in the word' together. Imagine how God would help us see more clearly the big

eternal picture of how he looks at us, what he is calling us to do and how that fits with his eternal plan - where Jesus is glorified as the King of kings because he alone has made the sacrifice that makes us right with God forever.

Because Jesus has made us right with God forever, we do not need to fear death - we can live with confidence and shine as his lights in the darkness, confident that he holds us safe in his arms forever.

Because of Jesus, we no longer need to feel eternally defeated by our weakness, sin and fears for he has overcome our sin and given his life to us so that we might live as witnesses for him each day!

Friends, like the disciples in our Gospel reading, our lives are transformed when we are given a new perspective on life – and can see the big picture more clearly.

May our perspective on life be renewed daily as we take up every opportunity to meet together and be ministered to with God's word and prayer.

May we always be open minded to see more clearly God's big picture of love and grace as revealed in his word.

As Paul prayed for the people of Ephesus, so may we be blessed with this prayer:

May God, the Father of all, use his glorious riches to make us strong. May his Holy Spirit give us his power deep down inside us and Christ remain in our hearts as we believe in him. May our love will have deep roots and a strong foundation. May we have power together with all the Lord's holy people to understand how wide and long and high and deep Christ's love is, even though it can't be known completely so that we are filled with everything God has for us.

God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power which is working in us. Give him glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. Give him glory through all time and for ever and ever. Amen.