

INI - SDG

Transfiguration Sunday

March 6, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

**Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21 *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

Theme: "'Tis Good, Lord, to be Here!"

- Here, where we have the prophetic word
- Here, where we listen to the voice which came from heaven

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

If I could be anywhere right now I would be . . . where? Sipping mai-tais on a beach in Hawaii? Playing baseball in Arizona? Anywhere that is warmer than here? Usually at this time of year, we begin to get that dreaded cabin fever. We feel like we've been cooped up inside for far too long and it is time to get out the short sleeve shirts and enjoy the sunshine! Then we turn on the weather to hear that another round of snow is headed our way this week. Oh, for the warmth and sunshine! No wonder so many of our members enjoy traveling to warmer climates at this time of year!

But right now, at this very moment, is there somewhere else you would rather be than here in the Lord's house, praising Him in His temple? Well I suppose that depends on what you think of coming to church. If I had you fill in the blank to the following statement, what word would you use? "Church is \_\_\_\_\_." Church is something my parents make me go to? Church is boring? Church is for older people? Church is redundant - that is I feel like I hear the same thing every time I go?

In the last year, many of our CLC congregations and at least one of our pastoral conferences have taken up a study of why CLC congregations seem to be losing so many of their young people. Right here at Prince of Peace, this is something we have had great concern about as we consider ministering to our young people and building them up in Christ. Our West Central Pastoral Conference took up a study of this matter and asked several of those who left the CLC, why they left. Some had personal reasons, such as they had a fall out with their pastor. Others did leave because they did not agree with the teachings of our church. Still others said they left their church because they felt their congregation and the CLC at large was old, stuffy, and boring.

For those who felt that the church was old, stuffy, and boring, what could have we done to keep them as members? Add a contemporary service complete with drums and guitar? What about when that got old and boring? Would a pastor in jeans and a t-shirt be more acceptable than a suit and black gown? Become more of a house of entertainment than a house of worship?

But what if . . . what if we could offer something here at Prince of Peace similar to what Peter, James, and John experienced on that mountain top? On this Transfiguration Sunday we heard in our Gospel lesson the amazing account of Jesus being transfigured in front of the eyes of these three disciples. We heard how Jesus shone with His glory as the Son of God. Glory which was His from eternity, but which He laid aside when He humbled Himself and became true Man. We heard how Moses and Elijah, those heroes of the Old Testament, appeared in glory and talked with Jesus. We heard how, as Peter says in our text, ***“a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”*** What if church was like that every Sunday?

As we turn to our text for this Transfiguration Sunday we find out from the Apostle Peter that we actually have something just as good, if not better than the events that transpired on the Mount of Transfiguration. Just as Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount to talk about Jesus death, we have the same here every Sunday in the prophetic word. Just as God the Father spoke from heaven about His Son on the mount, we have the same thing here every Sunday. So just as Peter said on the Mount of Transfiguration that it was good to be there, let us echo that sentiment about coming to church, ***“‘Tis Good Lord, to be Here!”***

Do you wish you had been there on the Mount of Transfiguration? Of course, who wouldn't! To see Jesus shining in all His glory and those great patriarchs of the faith, Moses and Elijah, standing there, talking with Jesus. But what is it that they talked to Jesus about? The current political news? The weather? Whether there was going to be an NFL lockout? Luke writes that they ***“appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”*** (Lk 9:30) Not soon after the Mount of Transfiguration was Holy Week. And at the end of Holy Week? Good Friday - Jesus' crucifixion. That is what these saints in glory were speaking to Jesus about! They were talking about His suffering and death.

And doesn't that make perfect sense? These two saints in glory were discussing the most important thing anyone can talk about. They were talking with Jesus about the very reason they were in heaven. Though Jesus would not be born for another 1500 years after Moses and a few hundred years after Elijah, while they walked this earth they had faith in the promises of God. They believed that God would send someone to save them from their sins. They believed in Jesus even before He was born.

And wasn't Jesus the focus of their work and writings? Moses is credited with having written the first five books of the Old Testament. And what is the focus of Genesis through Deuteronomy? A Savior. True, we often think of Moses as the giver of the Law, but by the Law is the knowledge of sin. And we need to know that we are sinners, so that we might look for a Savior. And Jesus is the promised Savior that Moses and all Old Testament believers looked for.

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. And what was the message of the Old Testament prophets? The coming of the promised one! From Samuel to

Elijah to Isaiah to Malachi, all of them foretold of a coming Savior who would save us. After John the Baptist was born, Zacharias his father, filled with the Holy Spirit said, ***"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began."*** (Lk 1:68-70) Zacharias knew that the birth of his son John, meant that the promised Savior was on His way - just as God had foretold by His holy prophets.

While we were not there on the Mount of Transfiguration, we have something even better. That's right, better than the appearance of Moses and Elijah in their glory! Peter says in our text that even though he was there on the mount and saw all this take place, we have the prophetic word made more sure. We have Moses and Elijah with us today, every time the Old Testament Scriptures are read in church. It is made more sure, because Jesus fulfilled every prophecy written of Him. We are able to hear them speak about the coming decease of Jesus in Jerusalem, written several hundred years before Jesus was even born. That is why it is good to be here! Because of the prophetic word which Jesus fulfilled by His life, death, and resurrection. Let's listen to Moses and Elijah talk about Jesus!

***I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."*** (Ps 122:1) King David said he was GLAD when people talked about going to church! Which one of us can truly say, we feel the same way as King David about going to church? Or consider what the psalmist writes in Psalm 84, ***For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*** (Ps 84:10) The psalmist says there is no place else he would rather be, than in the courts of the LORD's house! These men of God would agree, "'Tis good, Lord, to be here!"

Or consider Jesus. Jesus who was the very Son of God. Jesus who as the Word made flesh, knew the Scriptures better than anyone else. Jesus who as true God should have been worshiped. Yet what was Jesus custom on Saturdays? We read in the Gospels that it was His custom to go to the synagogue, to church, on Saturday, their day of worship. What a remarkable thing Jesus did! He who should have been worshiped, Himself went to worship God! Why? I would suggest two reasons. One, is that He went to worship because it was the God-pleasing thing to do. And as our Substitute under the Law, He did what was right in God's sight for the times we failed to do so. But the second reason I would suggest, is that He was showing us that it is good to worship God and to hear and learn His Word. Even at age 12, Jesus was in the temple discussing God's Word!

Often times I think we lose sight of why we go to church. We feel that we HAVE to go to church. Maybe we feel that we are doing God a favor by going to church. But we do not go to church to earn brownie points with God. Jesus has accomplished our salvation. There are no works we could do to earn our salvation, Jesus has earned it for us by His perfect life. Going to church on Sunday is not about us, it is about God! We are here to worship the Triune God who created us, the God who preserves us, the God to saved us by dying for us, and the God who rescued us from hell and adopted us as His children. We are here to pray to Him, to praise Him, and to give thanks to Him. It is so easy to lose sight of that!

But when we go to church God also does something for us. He speaks to us in His Word. We come to church to hear the very thing Peter, James, and John heard on the Mount

of Transfiguration. They were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty. They heard the voice of God the Father from the Excellent Glory, ***"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."***

We come to church to listen that same voice from heaven! Peter says of Scripture, ***"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*** Think of what this means! When we read a psalm responsively, or when we hear portions of Scripture used throughout our liturgy, or when the pastor reads the Scripture lessons, or when the sermon text is read, you are not hearing an award winning story from the fiction section of the library, but you are hearing the words of God Himself! The things that the holy writers wrote down are the very thoughts and word which God gave them. The Holy Spirit gave them the words to write. So when you hear the Scriptures you are hearing the voice of God! And when the pastor faithfully delivers to you the teachings of Scripture, you are hearing the teachings of God! And if we are hearing the word of God, we too can say, "'Tis good, Lord, to be here!"

What is it that God had to say about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? ***"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"*** Don't we hear the same thing when we listen to the Scriptures? We hear that the Father is well pleased in His Son because of who His Son is and what His Son was doing. He was pleased with His Son because He was willing to do the most loving thing He could - lay down His life to save sinful man! He was pleased with His Son, because His Son obeyed Him in every respect. Even dying on the cross, because that was the Father's will to save mankind! And so the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased is the central message of all of His Word! When you come to church to hear the voice from heaven as recorded in the Words of Scripture, you should expect - even demand! - to hear about the beloved Son of God who came to be your Savior and give you eternal life! When this is the case, we may say with Peter, "'Tis good, Lord, to be here!"

Where else would you rather be than right here? When Peter was on the mount of Transfiguration he said it was good to be there with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. In his confusion Peter said he wanted to build tents for these three in glory. Peter didn't want that amazing moment to end! But as amazing as that scene was, it came to an end just as quickly as it began. Jesus had work to do. He had to save us!

'Tis good, Lord, to be here! Here where we have that prophetic word made more sure by Jesus fulfilling it through His life, His death, and His resurrection. It is good to be here to listen to Moses and Elijah speak of Jesus' redemptive work. It is good to be here to listen to that voice from heaven, God's Word, as recorded on the pages of Scripture. Here where God speaks to us of His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Let us give heed to this light of God's Word that shines in a dark place, until the day of Jesus' return dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts. 'Tis good, Lord, to be here! Amen!