

“Tis Good Lord to be Here”

Less than a week before this glorious mountaintop experience – Peter had given that great and glorious confession, saying to Jesus – “You are the Christ.”

While that confession is still ringing in their ears, Jesus begins to teach His disciples what it means that He is the Christ – that, “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected ... and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Jesus clearly tells them that He must be put to death – but Peter rejects such thinking, and even takes Jesus aside and rebukes Him. And do you remember what happens next? Jesus rebukes Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” He says, “For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of man.”

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John aside – not to rebuke them – but to further reveal Himself to them. There, on the Mountain of Transfiguration, is the scene of which we sang – “Tis good Lord, to be here! Thy glory fills the night; Thy face and garments like the sun, Shine with unborrowed light.” (LSB 414.1)

How good it is for Peter, James and John to get away with Jesus – away from the constant crowds, the conniving Pharisees, the daily hassles of life. How good to be here with “the Christ” and with Moses and Elijah. Let’s camp out here – let’s stay here – so that we don’t have to be back down there.

Peter still isn’t setting his mind on the things of God. He’s still trying to call the shots. As soon as the words are out of his mouth – “a cloud overshadowed them” and the Father’s voice says, “Listen to Him.” No, not Peter – but Jesus, God’s beloved Son.

When the cloud that overshadowed them was gone – so was everything else, except Jesus. The transfigured Jesus, the radiant white clothes, Moses and Elijah – gone – but with them, “Jesus only.” A common, ordinary looking man. Just Jesus – and the voice of the Father ringing in their ears – “This I my beloved Son; listen to Him.”

On the way down the mountain, Jesus charges these disciples “to tell no one what they had seen.”

Don't say anything for now – because you cannot comprehend all that you have seen and heard – until you see the Son of Man risen from the dead. The glory of the Lord that they have seen on this mountain – cannot be understood rightly, apart from the glory to be revealed on the mountain called Calvary.

After Jesus has done His Good Friday sacrifice of atonement – and His Easter morning resurrection epiphany that all sin has been paid in full – then there will be time for telling all, and baptizing all.

As the disciples of Jesus living today – we too, like Peter, would rather hide out on the Mountain of Transfiguration – trying to escape the chaos of our sin-filled lives, and basking in the glory of the Lord.

Problems in marriage lead us to spend extra time at work. The school activities are a great excuse to get away from our parents. The excruciating pain of guilt is dulled with copious amounts of alcohol. In other words, the sin in our lives leads us to say – “it is NOT good to be here” – and so we look for a mountain to hide out on.

This “escapism” is common to all – but we, as Christians, have our own unique ways of hiding out. Fill our time with church activities and duties – after all, who can blame us for spending time at church?

In a few short days the Season of Lent will begin – and the Christian might try to escape into a pietism that has little to do with the crucified Jesus and the glory of His cross – rather, embarking on a 40-day program that resembles a self-help program, rather than true, pious, Christian devotion.

Another route of escape that we are very good at is simply denying the truth altogether – denying our sin – becoming intoxicated with the belief that being a responsible, honest, hard-working person – makes us worthy to stand in God's presence.

The problem with all these approaches is that they seek the glory of the Lord apart from the blood of Jesus Christ. There is only one escape from sin – and HE leads us down from the glorious mountain to the bloody hill of Calvary.

Jesus must descend the mountain, enter Jerusalem, and stand before Pontius Pilate. He must suffer, die, be buried, and be raised to life again on the third day – for this is His glory.

The glory of the Lord on the Mountain of Transfiguration is obvious – but on that mountain, our heavenly Father commands us to LISTEN to Him. His Word alone reveals the glory of His cross. There, on Mt. Calvary, is the fulfillment of all righteousness – there is your redemption – there is YOUR glory.

“Listen to Him,” the Father says. And what does Jesus say? “It is finished,” the most glorious words in all of Holy Scripture! The crucified Christ says that His sacrifice has atoned for all sin. Where there is sin, there is death – and where sin has been done away with – only life remains. Jesus has destroyed your sin, death, and the devil – and therefore – He MUST be raised to life again on the third day and He was!

Tis good Lord to be here – in the Divine Service, hearing the voice of the living Jesus. It is good for us to be here – because like Peter, we often do not have in mind the things of God, but rather our own things. Here, through His Word – the Lord reveals to us His Transfiguration, His Atoning Sacrifice, His Resurrection from the dead.

This transfigured, crucified, resurrected One – this One who bears the marks of His crucifixion and yet lives – this One from whose side flows the blessings of His sacrifice in our place – this is the One that we are to listen to.

And what does He say? “It is finished” – for you. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

On the Mountain of Transfiguration you see what is already yours “in Christ Jesus.” You see that all who die in the faith are with Him. You see the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting that is yours – “in Christ Jesus.” This is YOUR glory – for you live in communion with Christ – now, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.