

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Congregation: Amen.]

Dearly beloved by the Lord:

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. And there, **He was transfigured before them. His face shone {as} the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.**<sup>1</sup> There, upon the mount, they **were eyewitnesses of His majesty,**<sup>2</sup> and what a tremendous sight it was. Still, what they beheld was only a glimpse, only a scant measure of His eternal glory. And yet, even so, there could be no mistake about who He is.

Let us join them upon the mountain; let us see through their eyes who this man Jesus is. He is the One whose glory manifested itself upon another mountain in smoke, thunder, and lightning when He gave Moses the Commandments.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, He is the Light of Light,<sup>4</sup> the same Light that caused the skin of Moses' face to shine when He spoke with him.<sup>5</sup> Here, now, is the incarnate Light, once again speaking with Moses, and with Elijah, the consummate prophet, so that the Law and the Prophets are gathered around the One who gave the Law and sent the prophets.

And Peter is so overwhelmed, so glad to be there, having forgotten all the troublesome things that had been crowding in on his life just before this, as they were making their way toward Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Now, on the mountain, he sees clearly; now he knows that there is nothing to fear, for he sees Jesus, and with Him, Moses and Elijah. Delighted to be in the presence of these three, Peter says, **"Lord, it is good for us to be here,"** and then, he makes the bold suggestion, **"Let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."**

O Peter, in spite of all that you do understand on this mountain, there is still much that you have to learn, and we with you. For **while he was still speaking,** he was interrupted by the voice of God, the Father Almighty, which **came out of the bright cloud that overshadowed them.** **"This is My beloved Son,"** says He, **"in whom I am well pleased."** O Peter, there's no reason for three tabernacles; God Himself has supplied His own tabernacle, dwelling in flesh among men. Nor is this the gathering of three great men or three separate witnesses. Moses spoke of Him, as did Elijah. Here they are speaking with Him about what He is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. And so the voice makes it abundantly clear to Peter and to us, **"Listen to Him."**<sup>7</sup> When you hear Moses, when you hear Elijah, when you hear any of the words of Holy Scripture, you are hearing Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, very God of very God.<sup>8</sup>

And when **they lifted up their eyes,** after they **heard [the voice] and fell facedown on the ground [because they were] terrified,**<sup>9</sup> they saw only Jesus. So then, let us see only Him. Whenever we look, whenever we are distracted by the things of this life, and oh, how distracting they can be, whatever they may be, and however troubling or frightening they may be, as they no doubt were to Peter, James, and John, when they came down from the mountain and followed Jesus toward Jerusalem, toward that most horrid event, His crucifixion, they held in the back of their minds this vision which had been given them. So must we. Despite whatever disturbances or troubles cross our path, so must we also hold this vision in our minds, seeing with the eyes of faith what they saw with their eyes.

The Light of Light, very God of very God, in whom there is no darkness at all.<sup>10</sup> From the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, light came at His Word, light that He Himself declared good.<sup>11</sup> And by that light, He granted His creatures the gift of sight. By the same Word, He gives you physical eyes for seeing and eyes of faith, by which you may see what He has promised, just as Peter, James, and John were given to see His glory. Even so, none of the things that we see, or that they saw, can compare with the voice that they heard, the voice that forms faith and teaches the eyes how to see.

So let this brightness shine today upon you, that with the eyes of faith you may see only Him. Whatever burdens or struggles lie behind or before you, despite all the distractions that come your way day by day, week by week, and year by year, and no matter how bad and troubled life may become, indeed it does become so at times, full of death and darkness, so as to obscure your sight. Here is the One in whom there is no darkness at all. The darkness cannot overcome Him, for the Light shines, and He is good.

So let us come down the mountain with Peter, James, and John, remembering how foolish they were, even then. They **fell facedown on the ground**, a token of their own weak and feeble flesh that must likewise fall to the ground and become dust. So their falling was a token of their deaths and of ours. And then, what happened? **Jesus came and touched them, and said, “Be not afraid,”**<sup>12</sup> and raised them up, a token of our resurrection in Him.

Here is the marvelous thing: His transfiguration was the transfiguration of His flesh. The light that shone forth from Him was not borrowed light; it was unborrowed light, light that shone from the very body of the incarnate One, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily,<sup>13</sup> in our flesh. And so, in His great and glorious transfiguration, He foreshows, as we prayed, our adoption by grace. For dearly Beloved, this is you: this is your flesh; this is where you are bound. Like Him, you shall shine as the sun, in glory, at the great Day of the Lord, and all the troubles and trials and distractions of this life will be forever gone, and that which you can now see in advance will be yours in fact. You shall be transfigured, and your face and your garments shall shine, and you shall dwell with Him in His unity forevermore.

Until that great and glorious Day, you live by faith, not by sight. Your eyes of faith behold the promise whole and entire, even as you tread the road that still leads downward from the mountain, where glory appears as cross, and where the voice that named the Son still calls you to listen to Him.

So, therefore, today, as we behold this vision, let us with Peter, James, and John, see only Jesus. And let us hear Him. Let us turn our eyes of faith to the One who says to us today, “Take, eat; this is My Body, which is given for you. [Take, drink]; this is My Blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>14</sup> Let us fix both our physical eyes and our eyes of faith on Jesus,<sup>15</sup> who was transfigured, and who, at this altar, gives the sure guarantee that His flesh and your flesh, His transfiguration and your transfiguration, His eternity and your eternity are one.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Congregation: Amen.]

✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠

<sup>1</sup> {KJV}

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 1:16b

<sup>3</sup> See Exodus 20:18-19.

<sup>4</sup> "Nicene Creed." *Lutheran Service Book*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006. p.191.

<sup>5</sup> See Exodus 34:29-35.

<sup>6</sup> Immediately preceding the Transfiguration, Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:16), had rebuked Jesus for speaking of suffering, and had in turn been sharply rebuked himself as setting his mind on human things rather than divine (Matthew 16:21-23). Peter had then heard Jesus speak openly of self-denial, cross-bearing, and the loss of life as the cost of discipleship, followed by the mysterious promise that some would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:24-28). These events follow the earlier trials that, no doubt, already weighed upon Peter, including his failure after stepping out onto the water (Matthew 14:28-31), the disciples' repeated inability to understand the meaning of the feeding miracles despite Jesus' correction (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 16:8-12), and increasing conflict with religious authorities (Matthew 15-16).

<sup>7</sup> NASB

<sup>8</sup> "Nicene Creed." *Lutheran Service Book*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006. p.191.

<sup>9</sup> NIV

<sup>10</sup> See 1 John 1:5b.

<sup>11</sup> See Genesis 1:3-4b.

<sup>12</sup> KJV

<sup>13</sup> See Colossians 2:9.

<sup>14</sup> "The Words of our Lord." *Lutheran Service Book*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006. p. 197.

<sup>15</sup> See Hebrews 12:2a NASB.