Transfiguration B 2021

Listen to Jesus

The glory of God still terrifies yet Only by Christ speaking for us can there be joy.

Exodus 34: 1 – 9 Mark 9: 2 – 9

In the Transfiguration of our Lord, Peter, James and John saw His glory as the one and only God. Peter’s eye-witness was written by Mark and serves as the gospel reading for the day. Mark records how the apostles were terrified when they saw the glory of Jesus.

As Peter was fumbling for words, he speaks what he feels. He feels good that he could be with Jesus in his glory with His saints. He did not want the moment to end. For that he cannot be blamed. For what he experienced in the vision of the divine glory, was heaven!

This was not the sort of heaven that people dream up, or design to suit their fancies. We are used to coming up with our very own happy place in our minds and then labelling the place as *our heaven.* We become the fiction authors, writing in our minds what this fictitious place might be for us.

But there can be only one heaven! Heaven is where God is and there is only one God. One God in His heaven and there is not another.

Now Isaiah described a different sort of visit to heaven when he was whisked there by the Holy Spirit. (Isaiah 6: 1-5)

“*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*”

Does that sound like your happy place? What happened? Isaiah saw God in His glory in heaven and he wanted to die because he felt his sin in the presence of God. From his sinful heart came words that made his lips unclean and the heaven he saw had nothing unclean or unholy in it.

So Isaiah pronounced the judgment upon himself that he deserved to be undone and die forever in a unclean, unholy place that was like his heart and lips. This is true. Yet what guilty person may even speak before a holy God? In a courtroom only the judge gives permission to speak.

God silenced the demons who knew him quite well in the Capernaum synagogue and in the neighbouring villages of Galilee. For God does not permit the wicked to speak before Him.

Mankind lost the permission to speak in the presence of God when we listened to the snake instead of God.

**By Listening to the snake, sinners could no longer speak for themselves before God.**

So we tried that and lost our place in heaven. Next when God returns in his glory on the Last Day, there will be no time to come up with excuses why we were less than He expected. We will not have a platform to blame society for our lost opportunities, or blaming our parents for not steering us in the right direction.

**God’s holy law silences all sinful lips.**

When Moses cut the second tablets of stone because he broke the first set on the golden calf as Israel broke the entire old covenant there. (Exodus 34: 5-9) *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*

By listening to the law of God as found in the 10 commandments, we have no excuses and not even the right to speak before God. To see the full glory of God, like Isaiah, would bring us to our doom. In repentance we must confess that we are deserving of our everlasting death with no one to blame but ourselves.

But God has given us hope to be able to rejoice in His presence found in His Son. From the overshadowing cloud of His majestic presence, He gave the second witness of his one and only Son. As at the baptism of Jesus, the Father says that He is pleased with His Son. This pleasure of Father with Son has no beginning and no end.

When the Son became flesh and blood, the Father was also pleased with Jesus as the one and only sacrifice able to cancel all our sin and silence all Satan’s accusations against us. That’s why he told Peter, James and John upon the mount of glory: Listen to Him

**By Listening to the Saviour, sinners are spoken for.**

When the holy law of God terrifies you because your lips and heart are soiled with sin, then listen to Jesus! When you are terrified to meet the one true holy God, then listen to Jesus! When you replay your sinful deeds over and over again in your mind and hear Satan say that you have no chance to get to heaven, then listen to Jesus!

And what does Jesus say? Father, forgive them. Place their debt in my account. I have paid it in full.

He told Peter and James and John to wait until His glorious resurrection to tell them of the vision of his glory. From the garden by the tomb, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene that He is ascending to his father who is our father. (John 20:17) The father of the Lord Jesus is our father by grace in Christ alone. Therefore the Father is also pleased with us in Jesus.

By the gospel word that bespeaks us sinners righteous before God, seeing the glory of God holds no more terror but pure and everlasting joy. Listen to Jesus. He speaks loud and clear to you in holy absolution, holy baptism and holy communion. He will continue to speak for you on the day you will see his full glory. Then we will not have to build any tabernacles or tents to stretch out the experience, simply move in to the Father’s mansions that Jesus has prepared for us!