



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 19, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

Last Sunday after Epiphany; Transfiguration

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Exodus 24:12, 15-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 110

Second Lesson: [2 Peter 1:16-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 17:1-9](#)

Seeing God on the Glorious Mountain

1. God's glory brings _____
2. _____ reduces _____
3. God's glory brings _____ now and eternally
4. _____ your glorious _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

There is a book that was written in 1984 and then a movie made in 1996 by the same name. It was called Night of the Twisters. Maybe you've heard about this. It's technically a historical fiction. It's based off of a real event that happened in 1980. This happened in 1980 in Grand Island, Nebraska. That's the city I was born in but it was just a couple years before I was born. It was called Night of the Twisters because there were seven tornadoes in one night in this town. There was a lot of destruction. Not that many people died actually for seven tornadoes—five people. My family was there before I was born and they talk about how the tornado came and was coming down our street and then it picked up and landed again a couple blocks down the way. My family was spared. Even with seven tornadoes, many people were spared from that destruction.

Nebraska and where I lived later in life, Kansas City, Missouri, are part of what they call "Tornado Alley." It's this part of the Midwest where tornadoes and severe weather during the summer comes almost every day. I remember as a kid, when it would get into the afternoon/early evening, we would see the storm clouds start picking up and say "Another storm is coming," but what did we do? We didn't really run downstairs to get ready for a big storm. Often the bigger they were the more excited we were to watch the different colors and these amazing clouds roll in.

It didn't change as I got older because I actually worked at a golf course. It was a 56-hole golf course, so like three 18-hole courses. I remember several times we would be out in the middle of the golf course, way away from the clubhouse, and there would be storms rolling up and we'd think, "We're fine." Until one time I was way out in the back and all of a sudden this storm came and the wind was whipping and I was driving as fast as I could and there were trees falling where I was. I got in safe but one of my co-workers' car was crushed.

When you are around something like thunderstorms and severe weather all the time, you kind of get used to it. You get used to the things that you are around. Even though it's powerful and mighty, it starts to lose its awe when it has that familiarity.

As we look at the glory of God today and how we see God on the glorious mountain, we are going to look at what God's glory means to us. Are we still in awe of His glory? Do we still look to His glory and see how amazing it is? Or have we gotten too familiar with it? We are going to look at some of those questions. We are also going to look at not just one mountain but two glorious mountains where God shows His glory.

When we see Moses in the Old Testament in Exodus, we know what the Israelites have all been through. They have been in captivity. They have been slaves for generations. And if anyone knew God's glory, it was probably the Israelites. What did they experience in Egypt—all the plagues that finally forced Pharaoh's hand. While some of those plagues were on just the Egyptians, many of them covered the whole country.

I was listening recently about this. If you think about that Passover where the Angel of Death came, it's not like he didn't come to the houses of the Israelites. The reason he didn't come and take the firstborn was because they put the blood over the doors. The Angel of Death was coming, but it passed over their houses. So they understood God's glory. They had seen it.

Here as they had crossed over the Red Sea, they are now in the desert. Just before this, the leaders of the Israelites had this awesome opportunity. Even though often in the Bible it says "No one can see God because they will die," we have these little glimpses where people see a little bit of God, where God allows them to see Him in some ways. Just before this, many of the elders had come part of the way up the mountain and actually had eaten with God. This was the start of when the Covenant was being given.

But now it kind of steps up a notch when it says, ***The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain... I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction." When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD***

looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. When you describe something as a “consuming fire,” what do you think the emotions are? I think the truth is that *God’s glory brings fear.* For us and for those Israelites as they looked at that mountain, a consuming fire on a mountain, can you even imagine what it was like? I don’t think we can even picture what this consuming fire that doesn’t go out would be. We could maybe make it similar to that burning bush; that fire in that bush that wouldn’t go out. The closest thing we might have is a volcano with that lava spewing out and that fire, but usually it doesn’t last very long. But here it is, just this cloud and this fire, so most likely we’re a little afraid.

It’s not just that consuming fire. It’s not just the plagues and what they had seen God do. I think we also are fearful of God’s glory because of who God is and who we are. The easy thing to go to in this is when an angel appears. Not even God Himself, but just the messenger from God appears and what happens? People are afraid. The first word an angel always says is “Don’t be afraid.” So why are we afraid of just the messengers of God and afraid of God and His glory? God is perfect. God is holy and we know ourselves. We know that we can’t stand before a holy and perfect God. So when we know our sins and we know how we fall short, it causes us fear to know of a holy and perfect God. We struggle with the sins we know and it’s hard to put ourselves before that glorious God, knowing the two of us are like oil and water. They just can’t go together.

While we are in awe of God and His glory, something happens as we are around that so often. Even in our service today, the first song of our Liturgy, the Glory be to God, we sing about God’s glory several times. “Glory be to God...” We sing over and over again how God is glorious but when we come to worship, has God sometimes lost the awe because we do it so often and maybe we don’t see His glory in the same way the Israelites did? Does *familiarity reduce awe*? As we are around God so often, as we see His miraculous things, do we begin to value what He does and who He is a little bit less?

Did we see that with the Israelites? This consuming fire is up on the mountain and Moses goes up and he is going to receive the Commandments and instructions, but what is the thing that we remember most after this event? Moses goes up and when he comes down with the tablets, what are the Israelites doing? Are they singing worship songs waiting for Moses to come down? No! They’ve constructed a golden calf and they are worshipping this false idol. Moses was up there for 40 days and he comes down and the people are worshipping another idol! The Israelites had lost their awe even though they were standing before this glorious mountain.

What are ways that we lose our awe in God as well? Maybe it’s not considering how special Communion is, not taking advantage of it or preparing our hearts to receive the forgiveness of God—the body and blood of our Savior. Last week we had a Baptism and the miraculous work that God does in killing the sinful nature and forgiving our sins,

knowing that the sinful nature remains in us but we're forgiven. He washes us clean and works faith in our hearts. That miracle that happens and we say, "Oh, another Baptism." Or are we in awe of what God does?

During the season of Lent, we are going to talk about "acceptable sins." It's very easy for us to point out the sins of other people or those big sins that the rest of the world is doing and moaning about how evil some other people might be or how bad the world is, but are we really looking at our hearts and saying "What sins have I forgotten that I do? Have I said 'That's okay; it's not really a big deal.' Or what sins do I know I commit and just say 'I'll ask God for forgiveness later. I know of God's love and forgiveness so I don't have to be fearful of what I do. Those sins aren't that big and God will forgive me.'" We lose the awe we have for God and the consequences of our sins and how much our sins hurt this glorious God. It's easy for us as we're around God's glory and know Him so well that we might lose the awe of what He is and that He is perfect and righteous. As we look at God, we see His glory and it's not just about fear. While we struggle with our sins, we know that God's glory means something else.

Moses went up on the mountain and he was up there for 40 days and 40 nights. He comes down and that first thing we always remember is that golden calf. This is [Exodus 24](#). The golden calf is actually in [Exodus 32](#). What happens in the middle there? What we always remember is that is when God gave those Ten Commandments. "This is what you need to do. This is the Law." What God also gave was all the religious instructions and the instructions on how to build the tabernacle. Why is the tabernacle important? This is how God would live among them and how He would show His presence as they would wander through the desert and then enter into Israel. It was a foreshadow of something. It was the foreshadow of that temple that they would build in Israel. But the tabernacle is even a greater foreshadow of something bigger.

In the beginning of the [Book of John](#), we see it talks about how the Word became flesh and made its dwelling among us. The Word was God and is God. It's talking about Jesus. But when it talks about Him "dwelling" among us, another translation is that He "tented" with us, He "tabernacled" with us. This glory of God, of Jesus, would bring our salvation. As the glory is up there on the hill, on the mountain, we think about the Law, but what Moses was also receiving was the message of salvation and how *God's glory brings salvation now and eternally*. This was how God was going to share who He was and how He was going to work salvation; how they were to come and offer sacrifices for their sins. So up on the mountain as they see the glory, we know it's not just about Law and our sins but about God and His salvation—how HE comes to us and how HE forgives our sins.

This was the message for them then on Mount Sinai but it also was what we saw on Transfiguration. It's impossible to talk about this Mount Sinai and the glory of God without connecting it to the important thing that we really celebrate today—the Mount

of Transfiguration. We see God in His glory in such a different way. We see Jesus. We see Jesus, who walked around as a man but now He is glorified. The disciples had seen Him teach and preach, but now they see Him in this blinding light. But not just Him; they also see Moses and Elijah. As they are there (we hear in other sections of Scripture talking about the Transfiguration), they are talking about what Jesus was going to do.

We're preparing to celebrate as well as we head into the season of Lent. We are going to see Jesus go down resolutely to Jerusalem to suffer and die. As the disciples are there and they see this glory, we see that it seems like it's only an instant. It's so short. Here Peter is saying "How good it is for us to be here. Let's build a tent for each of you. Let's stay here." But it's almost like before he could finish saying that, then God speaks and then they are again terrified by God's glory. And then in an instant, it's done.

Why did God give this glimpse of the glory of Jesus? It was encouragement to the disciples; encouragement to see who Jesus really was. That's what Jesus tells them. "Don't talk about this yet, but remember it for when I rise from the dead." That's the encouragement for us today as well—to *remember your glorious Savior*.

Things aren't always easy in this life. There is suffering. There is hardship. There is pain. There is loss. So we get glimpses of glory. So often that glory can fill us with dread or fear but God especially wants us to remember His salvation. Jesus is our perfect substitute, our Savior. When God looks at Him, what does He say on the mountain? ***"This is my Son, whom I love."*** He was perfect for us. He didn't take any opportunity to get by and sin, but He always was following what God says. He lived perfectly in our place and then went to the cross to die, even though He was innocent. He took upon the sins of the world, even those who despise Him.

It is good for us to remember His glory in the times where we're afraid and fearful of our sins; for the times that we're afraid or fearful of what is going on in the world; for the times where we have a friend or family member who is facing death or have had a loved one die. It's so important to remember our glorious Lord, our Savior, in this specific moment. Why?—because our God is not a God of the dead but a God of the living. Moses and Elijah, who have been dead in our minds for hundreds of years, here they are, alive, and talking with Jesus.

So in those moments as we remember our loved ones and think about those who are facing death, we know it's not the end. We know we have a glorious Savior that has worked salvation for us and it's not about us. It's about what HE has done and how He is glorious and perfect in our place. We don't have to fear. There is no thing that is greater and our sin cannot compare to what God has done in Christ.

Truly, how good it is for us to be here, to hear of our forgiveness and so, even in the most difficult of times, the saddest times, when we face any trouble, we can say "How

good it is for us to be here to cling to the good news, to cling to our glorious Savior, to know that He is our Savior now and forever more." He is the God, not of the dead, but the God of the living. He brings us salvation now and forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.