

WHAT A VIEW!

Laying your eyes on your bride as she walks down the aisle on your wedding day. What a view! Seeing your newborn baby with your tear-filled eyes. What a view! Looking up at the grandeur of the Rocky Mountains. What a view! Entering this beautiful church building for the very first time. What a view! There are so many things that we lay our eyes on in this beautiful world that God created that take our breath away; that make us shake our heads and say, “Wow! Look at that. What a view!”

Peter, James and John would have said the same thing on the mountain of Transfiguration as they saw Jesus in all the glory he possessed as true God. This morning though, instead of me telling you about what took place, I have invited the apostle Peter here to explain to you what he witnessed and how he felt. I am going to ask him to step into this ambo and speak to you with this theme in mind. **What a view!** What a view of Jesus’ glory! What a view of his love! I now turn this over to Peter.

Good morning to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, living in the year 2016. As Pastor Wilke said, I am the disciple Peter and am happy to be here with you. It’s been almost 2000 years since I witnessed the Transfiguration, but to me, it feels like only a day or two. This event took place about 6 months before Jesus died. I knew Jesus would be crucified because Jesus told us a number of times. I didn’t want to believe him. Neither did the rest of the disciples. After all, look at all the good he was doing, the love he had for the people and all the miracles he performed. He could do so much more good for the people if he were alive and not dead. That’s what I thought. That’s maybe why Jesus made sure I went with him to witness his Transfiguration, to remind me once again in a very dramatic way why he was here in the first place.

It was Jesus, James, John and me that climbed up the mountain. As he normally did, Jesus went off by himself to pray. I have a confession to make. While we were waiting for him, we dozed off, maybe like some of you do when your pastor is preaching his sermon. We also dozed off when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Isn’t that awful? As we were dozing, we suddenly heard Jesus talking to someone. We opened our eyes and couldn’t believe what we saw. The Gospel writer Matthew described it this way. **Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.** This is how Luke put it. **The appearance of his face changed and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** Jesus’ face was so bright, it hurt my eyes. His clothes which had been a bit dusty and dirty from the trip couldn’t have been any brighter. I had never seen Jesus like this before. He had looked just like any of us but now he didn’t. He was not just a man. I was seeing Jesus in all his glory and holiness as the Son of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity.

It was an unbelievable and exciting sight but also one that scared me a bit. After all, I a sinner was in the presence of my holy God. Jesus’ face was shining with perfect glory. My face often was shining with anger, pride, selfishness, bitterness and an unwillingness to forgive. Jesus’ clothes were perfectly white. Mine were filthy and stained with all the wrongs I have done and the good I failed to do. I did not deserve to be in the presence of my holy God. He had every right to turn me away. Yet there I was and there he was.

As I looked at his glory, I wondered. “Why would this glorious and almighty Jesus be nailed to a cross like a common criminal?” I still didn’t get it. What I saw and heard next on that mountain answered that question for me. **Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** I couldn’t believe my eyes. Moses and Elijah, two great prophets in the Old Testament whom I read about, were right in front of me. They were talking to Jesus about his departure. Now I know your NIV Bible translates the word as “departure.” A more accurate translation of the Greek word is “exodus.” I like that word better because it more accurately describes what Jesus was about to do. Just as God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt in the first exodus, so God was going to use Jesus to lead this world out of the slavery of sin in the second exodus, the

most important exodus. Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about how he would do that. God's plan for him was to suffer and die but then rise from the dead.

I have another confession to make. When Jesus was arrested and beaten; when I saw his bloodied and lacerated body on the cross with nails in his hands and feet; when Jesus took his last breath and his dead body placed in a tomb, I forgot about the transfiguration and why he was here. I just looked at what happened. My friend, my teacher, was dead, my friend whom I even denied knowing three times. How could I have done that to him? It wasn't until I laid eyes on my risen Savior that I realized why he had to die. Sometimes it took a while for things to penetrate this thick skull of mine.

So that you are clear as to why he had to die, let me explain with this illustration. You have what you call credit cards, right? You can buy now with a credit card and pay later. You have to pay the bill eventually with real money. If you don't, the credit card company will come after you. Back when I lived, we didn't have credit cards but you could buy things and then pay for them later. If you didn't pay your debt, you were thrown into prison. God is like a credit card company. Whenever you sin, you wrack up charges on your spiritual credit card. Eventually payment needs to be made for those sins. For you and me, every sin is only payable with damnation in hell. Jesus didn't want that so he came into this world to make the payment for our sin with his perfect life, and then his suffering and death. That's the only way to avoid the penalty for our debt of sin which is hell. That's why Jesus had to go to the cross. He was able to pay for the sins of the world because he was not just a man. He was also true God as the Transfiguration revealed.

Again, to show how I still didn't fully get it, (boy, I was a slow learner) I suggested that I should build a little house so we could just stay up on that mountain and not leave. I wanted this moment to last forever. That was not God's plan. This is what happened next. **A cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.** That cloud scared me. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. Then I heard God's voice telling me to listen to Jesus. I looked up and saw Jesus looking like he always did before. He spoke to me and I was no longer afraid. That's something I learned. Jesus' voice always had a way of calming my worries and fears.

Jesus can do the same for you. What are you afraid of? Your health or a loved one's health, the safety of your children; acts of violence that could possibly affect you; an accident that could handicap you; the loss of your job; disease or sickness; enough money for retirement; being alone; the death of a loved one; your own death? There are many scary things living in a world of sin. I got scared a lot. My advice to you is to listen to Jesus. Listen to Jesus as he assures you that he is always with you; that he will watch over you and take care of you; that he loves and forgives you; that you are in his hands so everything will be okay.

Let me tell you one more thing about my experience on that mountain. Seeing Moses and Elijah alive and in glorious splendor, talking to Jesus revealed to me that what the Bible says is true, that believers in Jesus will go to heaven and be able to speak to one another and talk to Jesus as a brother and friend. That's true not just for the people you read about in the Bible, but all believers, people that you knew, believers like Doris, Dale, Robert, Roger, Russell, John, Willie, Howard, Derek, April, loved ones you shed tears over as you stood by their casket. Remember. You will see them again in heaven. You will live with them again in heaven. They will be a part of your life again for all eternity. Jesus' transfiguration guarantees that.

Until that day comes, I have to be honest. There will be hardships. My life was not easy. Yes, I traveled with Jesus and was even able to perform some miracles. But I was beaten. I was thrown into prison. I was threatened and ridiculed. Finally, I was crucified upside down. But believe me, it was worth it. Look where I am living right now because of Jesus. You will have challenges. You will have disappointments. You will get frustrated over your own sins. I did. There will all kinds of heartaches and headaches that will come your way. When they start to overwhelm you, think of Jesus' transfiguration. Think of who he is and what he has done for you. I saw Jesus in all his glory and I can tell you. What a view! What a view it is to see him in all his glory

every day in heaven and to enjoy the warmth of his love along with my glorified brothers and sisters in Christ. This view will one day be yours. Believe that. Hang on that. Look forward to that. So my brothers and sisters in Christ, as I bid you farewell, I know we will meet again. I look forward to that. I look forward to spending my eternity with you in heaven. Until that day comes, listen and keep listening to Jesus. Thank you for the privilege of being here with you today. God bless. Amen.