THE COMFORT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jan. 21, 2018 Matt. 17:1-9

Dear Friends in Christ—Peter, James and John were in the presence of the divine God on the mountain that day. There was no doubt at all. For on this day Jesus was transformed before them. The Greek word here is metamorphothai. This word means to change into a different form. His whole being shown with a brilliance like the sun. For just a little while Jesus let His divine nature override His humanity. Why? To erase any doubt in the minds of the disciples that He really was the true God.

Why did Jesus pick these three disciples to witness this event? The Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 13:1—“Let 2 or 3 witnesses establish every charge.” Peter says in 2 Peter 1:16-18-“but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic glory, ‘this is my beloved Son, with whom I was well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.

These three saw what no human being has ever seen----The glory of God in His own Son.

The account of Luke goes into more depth on the appearance of Moses and Elijah. They were discussing with Jesus His soon-to-be-accomplished departure at Jerusalem. They were discussing the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The disciples heard them talking.

Can you imagine the wonderment of the three as they observe the two giants of the faith from the past, standing there before them with God in the flesh? How did they know the two to be Moses and Elijah?

As if all this were not enough for one day, the heavenly Father speaks to them from a cloud, telling them that this is My beloved Son in whom I was well pleased----listen to Him! How can anyone ever forget this fantastic event?

They didn’t. But only Peter mentions it in his second letter. Why James and John did not talk of it, only God knows. But they were also eye witnesses to something only three on earth saw.

What is it we can learn from this awesome event? It should erase any doubt about the truth of God’s Word. There have always been nay-sayers. Those who will not believe and refuse to see Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Never was this more apparent than in the years leading up to the Lutheran Reformation which happened 500 years ago. Spiritual darkness covered the world like a blanket and the Light of God’s Holy Word was pretty dim.

God’s Law, do this and don’t do that was what most people lived by. And it hasn’t gone away even today. People still ask-----‘have I done enough to be saved?’.

Sometimes the comfort of the Gospel seems to be hard for some to understand. When Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration, they were discussing the departure of Jesus from Jerusalem. Where was Jesus going? Not on vacation. Back to heaven after rising from the grave, alive and well.

How do we know this to be true? There were eyewitnesses. Jesus appeared after He rose to His disciples more than once; He appeared to over 500 followers at one time according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15. It’s a historical fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The soldiers guarding the tomb saw the angel come down and roll away the stone. They fainted for fear. When they reported to the authorities what happened, they were told to tell everyone that the Jews came and stole the body.

A Jewish historian, Josephus, also reports that the man named Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead.

This same Jesus said in John’s gospel, “If you believe in Me, even if you die, you shall live.” And, “Because I live, you will live also.”

Can we believe the words of Jesus? Absolutely! Not only did Jesus say He is the Son of God and I and the Father are one and I am going to prepare a place for you and if I do that, I will come back to take you to be with Me.

Jesus also, on many occasions, proved His divinity by doing what mortal man cannot. He changed water into wine; He walked on water; He stilled a storm with His word; He raised people from the dead; He could read the mind of the Pharisees. And He proved His divinity to the three on the mountain by letting His true form and nature shine like the sun.

This is the God we worship and trust with our very lives. We believe that even though we are sinful people who cannot, try as we might, live holy and perfect lives as God demands-----we are forgiven because the Lord Jesus took our sins to Calvary as our substitute. God is no longer angry at us but sees us as perfect and sinless because of our faith in His Son.

The transfiguration is comforting for us because it shows that our trust in Jesus as our Savior is not misplaced. We can be totally sure that our future in paradise is secure as long as each of us walks and talks with the Lord who really is who He says He is-----God in the flesh.