

Luke 9.28-45
The New Exodus

Today we're focusing in on Luke's account of what's called the *Transfiguration* of Jesus. This is one of those key moments in the life of our Lord where we get a real glimpse of his true heavenly majesty.

The apostle Peter, many years after this, wrote the following in 2 Peter 1, reflecting on what he saw on this day:

We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ 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 am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

And the main point I want us to see here in Luke 9.28-45 is that *Jesus Christ is the majestic Lord over all. And he's bringing a new Exodus to deliver his people from their captivity to Satan, sin, death.*

1. The Prophet Greater than Moses (verses 28-36)

Now, at the end of last week, we saw in the first half of Luke 9 that Jesus predicted his death for the first time. And in verse 27 he told his disciples that some of them wouldn't die until they saw the Kingdom of God.

And here starting in verse 28, we see the glory of Jesus burst forth, as he's glorified on the mountain. So, the Transfiguration of Jesus is a fulfillment of his word to the apostles that some of them would see the kingdom before they died.

Because here they see Jesus *the King* glorified on a mountain with the glorified saints of old, talking about his departure that he'll accomplish at Jerusalem.

Luke starts off here in verse 28 by telling us, "*Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.*"

So, four things about the context: 1. it's *8 days* after Jesus predicted his death, 2. they're on a mountain, 3. Jesus is only accompanied by Peter, James, and John—his three closest companions, and 4. he's praying.

It's especially significant that they're on a mountain. Because the mountain is a place of communion with God. It's a place where God reveals himself to people.

And mountains marked key moments in the lives of both Moses and Elijah, specifically. It was on Mount Carmel that Elijah made a spectacle of the priests of Baal.

And Moses was on the mountain when the Lord revealed his character to him. In Exodus 34 it says, starting in verse 5 that after Moses went up Mount Sinai:

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,

And, *importantly* in light of what happens with Jesus here, it was during that time on the mountain that *Moses' face shined*. Just as we see here with Jesus.

And, Jesus goes up to this mountain specifically in order *to pray*. Remember back in chapter 3, it was *while he was praying* as he was baptized that the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the voice from heaven declared that he was the Son of God.

And in chapter 6, he chose his 12 apostles after spending a night in prayer. And we just saw in the last scene that prayer was the setting for *Peter's confession* that Jesus is the Christ of God.

And so here, as he's seen that the climax of his mission is drawing near, Jesus goes up this mountain with his three closest companions to pray. And they fall asleep. But he's glorified and joined by Moses and Elijah in glory.

And Luke says in verse 31 that they were talking about his “*departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*”
What departure?

Well, Jesus just predicted his death for the first time in verse 22, and he’ll mention his death again later in verse 44. So, it’s clear that the “*departure*” here is a reference to his coming death.

But, *why* refer to this as a *departure*? *Why not* sacrifice, or just death? Well, there’s a very good reason for that.

Because, you see, the word translated “*departure*” in verse 31 *isn’t* the normal word for “departure.” It’s actually the word, “*Exodus.*”

This word is only used three times in the New Testament—here, 2 Peter 1.15, where Peter talks about his death. And then in Hebrews 11.22, which is a reference to the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt.

And so, combined with the presence of Moses here, along with the ongoing presentation in Luke’s Gospel of Jesus as the One come to deliver his people from their enemies....

...this links Jesus’ death and resurrection with the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt—that great act of deliverance where the Lord brought his people out of slavery and crushed the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

And so, Christ’s death isn’t just a death like other deaths. Because it *actually accomplishes something*. It will be a *New Exodus*....

This is the way he’s going to deliver *his people* out of bondage under the tyranny of sin, death, and the devil—just as God delivered his people Israel out of bondage in Egypt.

And, of course, it’s *no coincidence* that it’s *Moses* and *Elijah* who come to talk with Jesus on the mountain about this Exodus. Because these are the two great figures in Israel’s history that in a sense symbolize the whole of the Old Testament—the *Law* and the *Prophets*.

So then, in verse 32 the three apostles wake up to see Jesus glorified and talking with Moses and Elijah!

And Peter says, verse 33: "*Master, it is good that we are here. Let us build three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.*" And Luke adds, tellingly, that he didn't know what he said.

They're on the mountain, with Jesus glorified and the glorified saints of old. This is a place where *heaven and earth have met*. And, Peter wants to build tents for them.... *Not necessarily* a bad thing in itself.

But Peter's mistake was that he wanted to build *three* tents. You see, he makes basically the same mistake the crowds made when they said Jesus was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets of old.

He thinks *Moses and Elijah* can be placed alongside Jesus. And *just 8 days after* his confession of faith where he declared that Jesus is the Christ of God! He saw that Jesus was the Messiah. But he *apparently* didn't understand that Jesus was *altogether greater* than anyone else.

Now, it would be easy for us to be hard on Peter. But put yourself in his place. He's a religious Jew. And he sees *Moses and Elijah* in glory! These *two great pillars* of the Old Testament.

They're second in Jewish consciousness only to Abraham! I mean, this would be sort of like a patriotic American seeing George Washington and Thomas Jefferson!

And we often do basically the same thing as Peter does here, *don't we?* Because we who believe in Jesus have seen, with the eyes of faith, the *exalted majesty* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, we want to build tents for all these different things and place them alongside Jesus! As if our faith in Christ is just some compartment we can put side by side with other things, rather than something to be placed over everything else.

What is it for you? What is it that's competing with Jesus for supremacy in your life? I'll confess that for me, one of those things can be professional hockey. Now, that might seem silly to some of you.

But I'm telling you, when the Philadelphia Flyers are toward the end of their season and into the playoffs, my heart can tend to say, "*Lord, it's good that I'm here.... Let me build two tents—one for You and one for the Flyers.*"

So, what's that thing for you that you're building a tent for in your heart to place beside Jesus? Those things can even be good in themselves.... There's nothing wrong *per se* with hockey. But we have to be careful lest anything compete for our devotion to Jesus.

Well then, we see in verse 34 that while Peter was talking, a cloud appeared and *overshadowed* them. And they're *scared*.... *Why?*

I mean, they're on a mountain. A little cloud's nothing to worry about.

Well, they're scared for good reason. Because this *isn't just* an ordinary cloud. *This* is the Cloud that descended on Mount Sinai and met Moses. It's the Cloud that filled the Tent of Meeting and led Israel in the wilderness!

And this voice comes from the cloud and says to them, verse 35, "*This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!*"

This is *exactly* what we need when we want to place other things alongside Jesus Christ. We need the Lord to speak to us a word of rebuke. We need to hear the word of God saying to us—Jesus Christ, my Son, is *supreme* over everything! Don't *build tents* in for anything else!

Because, *you see, Israel* was God's chosen. *Moses* was God's chosen. *Elijah* was God's anointed prophet—his chosen. Moses and Elijah together symbolize the *whole Old Testament*!

And now *Jesus* comes on the scene. And he's the Chosen One that supersedes all the others. *He's* God's own Son. Nothing else can hold a candle to Jesus.

And so, Moses and Elijah start to fade into the background. As *everything else* falls away in the presence of the majestic Son of God.

And the commandment that comes from the cloud is, “*Listen to Him.*” *Remind* you of anything? That Deuteronomy passage we read earlier about a prophet like Moses.

Deuteronomy 18.15: “*The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from among your brothers—it is to him you shall listen!*”

And so, by the end of the scene in verse 36, Moses and Elijah have entirely left the picture. And Jesus alone is standing there, as the voice of the Father declared that *He* is the one who’s words we’re to listen to.

You can’t help but think here of the words of Hebrews 1:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Now, remember that passage we read toward the beginning from 2 Peter, where Peter recalled the Transfiguration? Well here’s what Peter goes on to say in the very next verse:

And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Don’t miss that. What Peter’s saying is that the prophetic word is *even more* sure than what he saw that day on the mountain! How can he say that?

Well, because the prophetic word of the apostles is grounded in the *accomplished* Exodus of Christ’s death and resurrection, which is now a *fulfilled reality*.

And *we* have that word, too. We have it in the Bible’s revelation of Christ’s completed work, along with the presence of the risen Christ in our

midst by the Holy Spirit. The word of God is our light shining in a dark place! Don't neglect it, *brothers and sisters!*

2. The Prophet Amidst a Faithless Generation (verses 37-43a)

Well then, in the next scene, starting at verse 27, Jesus throws off his glory and enters back into the struggle. It's the following day. And he comes down the mountain with Peter, James, and John.

And not surprisingly, he's met by a great crowd of people. And in the crowd there's this man who cries out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him."

Now, *don't miss* what's going on here. Jesus comes down a mountain after talking with Moses and Elijah about an *Exodus*, and immediately confronts a dark power that's put his people in bondage.

This is an especially severe case of demon possession. In fact, it's so *severe* that even the Apostles, who were just given power and authority over all demons at the beginning of the chapter, couldn't do anything for the boy.

And so, Jesus cries out in verse 41, "*O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?*"

These words are similar to how Israel was often described in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 32.5, *for instance*, Moses called them a "*crooked and twisted generation.*"

And notice, this is in direct response to the fact that the apostles couldn't cast out the demon. It's *directed* at them! *These 12* men Jesus chose as the *new leadership* for God's people after he's gone!

You see, the glory of the New Covenant *isn't* that the *people* are any better than they were under the Old Covenant. No. *By nature* God's people under the New Covenant are no different than faithless and twisted Israel was.

But the glory of the New Covenant that's brought by the New Exodus of Jesus' death and resurrection is that the Lord accomplishes for us an *everlasting salvation in spite of* our faithlessness and twistedness.

It was while we were *still sinners* that Christ died for us. Jesus does what we *cannot do*! He *casts out* the demons, *heals* the sick, *forgives* the sinful.

Because Jesus went before us *into* the waters of judgment and rose victorious. And he now parts those waters *for us* so that we can cross over into the Promised Land of his kingdom! Because, *in Christ* we've *confronted* sin and death head on, and prevailed!

That's how Paul, after running down a litany of sins that keep people from inheriting the Kingdom of God, can write in 1 Corinthians 6.11.

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

You see, brothers and sisters, Jesus does for us what we *cannot do* for ourselves. *Thanks be to God!* I said it last week and I'll say it again, *Apart* from that none of us has any hope!

And so, here with this man's demonized son, Jesus does what *no one else* could do—*not even* his apostles who were supposed to have power and authority over all demons.

He casts out this demon with a word, as we've seen him do so often before. He heals the boy, and he gives him back to his father. And then, Luke tells us at the beginning of verse 43, *"all were astonished at the majesty of God."*

3. The New Exodus of the Cross (verses 43b-45)

But *even though* the disciples saw Christ glorified on the mountain, and the crowds marveled at the majesty of his power in casting out the demon, Jesus' *true glory* wouldn't be fully revealed until after he accomplished the Exodus he was talking about with Moses and Elijah.

And in the following verses, we see just what that Exodus will look like. Because there's a very telling shift from the first half of verse 43 to the second half.

Everyone was amazed at the *majesty* of God after Jesus cast out the demon. "*But,*" Luke tells us in the second half of verse 43, *But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."*

What?! The very Christ who came to deliver his people from *their enemies* is *now saying* that he'll be *delivered into* the hands of *his enemies!*....

Now,, the way Jesus puts this—"Let these words sink into your ears"—is important because, remember the *Parable of the Sower* (in chapter 8)—the word of God is like seed that's planted in soil. And the crop it produces shows what type of soil it fell on.

So, Jesus essentially tells his apostles here, "take this word, plant it in your ears, and let it take root—the *Son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.*

You see, Jesus is the prophet foretold by Moses. And *this* is his prophecy: *I'm going to be delivered over to death."* *This* is my true mission. *This* is what you need to hear and understand.

This is my Exodus. This is how I'll deliver my people from their bondage to Satan, sin and death. I'm going to set my face to go to Jerusalem *in order to die.*

But then Luke says in verse 45 that this was hidden from the apostles, so that they didn't understand it. And they were *even scared* to ask Jesus about it.....

Now, Jesus' death is just a given for us. But put yourself in the position of the apostles. They've *seen* Jesus' power. And they're *expecting* deliverance from oppression.

But the problem was that they didn't understand the nature of the deliverance Jesus came to bring. And they also didn't grasp what he needed to do in order to bring it.

You see, *Moses led* Israel across the waters of judgment on dry ground. And they witnessed the Lord crush the Egyptians in the sea. But Israel *remained* a faithless and twisted generation. And they were still a faithless and twisted generation when Christ came.

And so, what they needed—what *we* needed—was a Deliverer who'd *not simply lead* his people.

But One who'd *plunge himself* headlong *into* the waters of judgment *for* his people, *deliver himself over to death for* their deliverance *from death*. And rise victorious for their entrance into Life.

The apostles would eventually understand this after Christ was raised from the dead. But before they saw him in his resurrected glory, they couldn't grasp what he had to do.

And in reality, we're no different, *are we?* The 2nd verse of the hymn we sang earlier says something we all know deep down:

The truth remains hidden from each one of us until God in his mercy opens our eyes to what he's done for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

And that's *our* only hope, *brothers and sisters*. *We* are a faithless and twisted generation—like *every generation* that came before us and *every generation* that will come after us.

And *in order for* us to be freed from our bondage in this land of sin and death, the very Son of God had to become man, and be delivered into the hands of men to be crucified and raised *so that* we might be reconciled to God through him. He lived the life we ought to have lived. And he died the death we deserve to die.

So, take these words and put them *into* your ears. Christ has *defeated* sin and death by his death and resurrection! He's *defeated your*

sin and *your death* by his death and resurrection! He's *defeated* my sin and *my death* by his death and resurrection!

What can we do in light of this but marvel at his majesty and his mercy, and seek with all our might to live for him and to spread this Good News wherever we go?

And so, may this word of the gospel *sink so deeply* within us that we might bear much fruit to his glory.