

Mon/Tues/Weds: read Matthew 17:1-6. We simply cannot continue in Matthew's Gospel without one more look at the glory and the voice of God the Father as revealed in the Transfiguration. Why does God the Father come down, just at this moment onto *this* mountain, to speak to the three leaders of the Apostolic band, telling them to *listen* to His Son?

Well, consider that Jesus Himself, and His voice in prayer, (according to Luke's version of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:29), is the cause of the Transfiguration. It is because Jesus prays..., unburdening Himself to His Father, that the Father comes down in glory!

Next question: "What would be the subject matter of Jesus' prayers on the mountain?" Well, consider what Jesus says *before* the Transfiguration, and repeats *after* it: (words to the effect): "I am so sick and saddened by your spiritual hardness of heart, O Israel! How long will you be this way, and how long will I have to put up with your disappointing, grievous unbelief?" Isn't that what burdened Jesus as He prayed? Consider the following verses, which express Jesus' frustration with not being listened to (both by hard-hearted Israel, and even by His own disciples):

Matthew 15:6-8 (to Israel): "*You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."*"

Matthew 15:16-17 (to Twelve): "*Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?"*"

Matthew 16:8-11 (to Twelve): *Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

Matthew 16:23 (to Peter): *Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

(And then *after* the Transfiguration, when confronted with the failure of the Apostles to cast the demon out of the little boy), Matthew 17:17:

¹⁷ "*O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."*

Meditate and Pray: What father in the world would *fail* to listen to His heart-broken son, expressing such sadness day after day... or *fail to come to his aid*? Well, this is just what the Heavenly Father does in Matthew 17:1-6. He breaks through all the fog of an ungrateful, unappreciative world, which has treated His Son like a peasant, like off-scouring, like someone

never worth listening to! He breaks through and with thunder says: “This is my Son, listen to Him!”

And, oh, is this not the very same, strong, Divine, paternal warning we need in our day, to wake us up from our unbelieving slumber? Use these words from Psalm 2, found in hymn # 314, as your prayer that once again, through His Word, and through world events, God the Father would thunderously get the world’s attention in order to turn them back to listening to His Son, as He speaks in Scripture!

*O wherefore do the nations rage,
And kings and rulers strive in vain,
Against the Lord of earth and Heav’n
To overthrow Messiah’s reign?*

*Their strength is weakness in the sight
Of Him Who sits enthroned above;
He speaks, and judgments fall on them
Who tempt His wrath and scorn His love.*

*By God’s decree His Son receives
The nations for His heritage;
The conqu’ring Christ supreme shall reign
As King of kings, from age to age.*

*Be wise, ye rulers of the earth,
And serve the Lord with godly fear;
With reverent joy confess the Son
While yet in mercy He is near.*

*Delay not, lest His anger rise,
And ye should perish in your way;
Lo, all that put their trust in Him
Are blest indeed, and blest for aye.*

Thursday: read Matthew 17:7-13. There is something beautifully domestic to see Jesus coming down the mount of Transfiguration, having veiled His glory once again in His humanity, and therefore approachable as the simple, lowly Savior. For the three disciples who were with Him, who fall to the ground in terror because they can’t take the white-hot glory of His presence in Matthew 17:6, it was His human touch (v. 7) and His reassurance, “Do not fear” (v. 8), which revived them. Because He was then so approachable, they were able to ask Jesus about their confusion about the Messiah’s coming in verse 10! Jesus was approachable, even when the disciples were disappointingly wrong about the comparative importance of Elijah’s coming compared to Jesus’! And how patiently Jesus answers their questions in verses 11-13, admitting that He will be mistreated and misunderstood – just as the real “Elijah” John the Baptist was!

Meditate and Pray: Make hymn # 381 your prayer, as you think of weak, doubting sheep in the church of God, who need Jesus’ gentle, patient instruction, lest they fall away to their destruction! May the Lord carry each of us when we like the Twelve so often stumble as we walk with our Savior!

*Brethren, we have met to worship and adore the Lord our God;
Will you pray with all your power, while we try to preach the Word?
All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down;
Brethren, pray, and holy manna will be showered all around.*

*Brethren, see poor sinners round you slumbering on the brink of woe;
 Death is coming, hell is moving, can you bear to let them go?
 See our fathers and our mothers, and our children sinking down;
 Brethren, pray and holy manna will be showered all around.*

*Is there here a trembling jailer, seeking grace, and filled with tears?
 Is there here a weeping Mary, pouring forth a flood of tears?
 Brethren, join your cries to help them; sisters, let your prayers abound;
 Pray, Oh pray that holy manna may be scattered all around.*

*Let us love our God supremely, let us love each other, too;
 Let us love and pray for sinners, till our God makes all things new.
 Then He'll call us home to Heaven, at His table we'll sit down;
 Christ will gird Himself and serve us with sweet manna all around.*

Friday: read Matthew 17:14-16 and Mark 9:14-18. My, how quickly Jesus is willing to veil His own glory and don the armor of being “the Defender and Shepherd of His flock”! Jesus so quickly assumes the thankless job of mediating the conflict between the remaining 9 Apostles who had been left at the bottom of the mountain, and the rulers and Pharisees who seek to discredit them, in Mark 9:16-17. But be not deceived! Christ is still clothed with authority – as the behavior of the wondering crowds shows in Mark 9:15, and as the obedience of the demon to Jesus’ command to depart (Matthew 17:17-18), both prove!

Meditate and Pray: Let us rejoice that our Savior is now fully installed with all authority. Let us ask Him to ride His chariot of glory right through our relationships, job situations, difficulties with unsaved loved ones, as well as our struggles with sin and Satan, using hymn # 237:

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
 Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;
 O Savior meek, pursue thy road
 with palms and scattered garments strowed.*

*Ride on! ride on in majesty!
 In lowly pomp ride on to die;
 O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
 o'er captive death and conquered sin.*