

The Exclusive Glory of Jesus Christ, Part 1

Luke 9:32-36

Open your Bibles and turn to Luke 9. We're going to be returning, here, to Luke's account of the transfiguration, Luke 9:28-36. We actually started this account last week and learned about the setting for the transfiguration. We heard about the unveiling of Christ's divine glory, the meeting then, that took place up on the mountain between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. It's an amazing scene. And today we're going to see how God the Father answered the prayer of Jesus Christ, his Son. And how he answered that prayer for his sake and for his disciples, and how significant and meaningful that that answer proved to be.

Let's start by reading there in Luke 9:28 and following, "Now about eight days after these sayings," those sayings, those are the ones from verse, basically starting back in verse 18 all the way up to verse 27. So that whole scene there, "about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the

appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

“Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah,' not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him!' And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.”

It's been a joy this year to read together as a church through the daily Bible readings, some from the Old Testament, some from the New, some from the Psalms and the Proverbs. We are now in Deuteronomy, and, as it were, we're in Luke. We're gonna

probably read through Luke a lot faster than I'm moving through Luke, but you'll get a preview of what's ahead, so that's good.

But perhaps as you've seen in your Old Testament reading, we've read through the first four books of the Bible now. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. You may have seen how this transfiguration account is really full of allusions to scenes and themes from Israel's history, even just in what we've covered already, verses 28-31. Jesus took them up on the mountain, and something really spectacular happened up there, verse 28. That, that alludes back to Mount Sinai and Moses on Mount Sinai receiving the law. It also, for Elijah, it refers back to Mount Carmel as the Lord distinguished himself from all the prophets of Baal. False Baal worship was judged at that scene, Mount Carmel.

Moses and Elijah, picturing the Law and the Prophets, there. When they appear, they are looking to Christ, which is exactly the message of the Old Testament, that the Law and the Prophets point to Jesus Christ. We see them, here, as they're having a meeting with Jesus even before the disciples are awake, and they are talking about what? His departure, which is about

to be accomplished at Jerusalem. We talked about that word departure, it's actually, the trans, it's a translation of the word exodus. This is his exodus that he's about to accomplish. And here the, the exodus that he's about to accomplish is a greater exodus than even Moses when he took the Israelites out of Egypt. It's a greater exodus than he performed.

But one point of focus, verse 29, when Jesus, when his face changed, the brightness of his glory. That takes us back to something in Moses' time, Exodus chapter 34, when he encountered the glory of God. It says in Exodus 34, that when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, remember he, he had smashed the former two tablets because of the idolatry of the Israelites dancing around the golden calf, Exodus 32. But he went up to the mountain again after God allowed and accepted his mediation between God and the people. And he comes down after receiving the law again, and he had the two tablets in his hand again. And as he returned to the people, having been on the mountain forty days and forty nights, "He did not know," it says in Exodus 34, "he did not know that the skin of his face shone because he'd been talking with God."

It was so bright and so blinding that Moses had to put a veil over his face for the sake of the people. It says in Exodus 34:35, "The people of Israel would see the face of Moses. The skin of Moses' face was shining, and Moses would put the veil over his face again until he went back in to speak with God." And then he would remove the veil. The brightness of the glory, it was such that Israel could not handle the brightness of the glory of his face. They couldn't look on even, even a fading glory of Moses' face. So it was for their sake that Moses wore the veil.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3, he picks up on that. He sees a change in our ability to handle the presence of the glory of God. The change comes, as Paul says, "in Christ." And it comes because of Christ. And it is clear evidence, as Paul is making the argument there, that the new covenant is superior to the old covenant. In fact, that's, as we read through Hebrews, that is the continual theme of the writer of Hebrews. The new is superior to the old. The old points to the new; the, the old is fulfilled in the new, and the new is superior to the old.

The old covenant, Moses had to put a veil over his face, but in the New Covenant, 2 Corinthians 3:16, "When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, "all of us Christians, all of us who have turned to the Lord, "we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord," we're being put in the place of Moses there, "unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, we're being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Folks, that is what we are seeing happening. This is a first in the transfiguration account. And this is what we're seeing happening in the transfiguration account. In Christ, there is a greater glory, and it's a transforming glory, it's a sanctifying glory. And rather than look away from it, we are, as Christians, as members of a New Covenant, we're not to look away from it. We are to gaze at it. We're to look at that glory. We're to look at it full on, straight on, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now with just that thought planted in your minds, I want you to think about that and see if you can find that as we move through the text because that's what Paul taught there, in 2 Corinthians 3. That's what this is all about. That's what this transfiguration account is all about. The fullness of God's glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. And unlike Israel, who had to look away from the glory and told Moses, Put a veil on! We can't look at this! We're instead to look straight at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And in fact, as God will descend and say, we're to look nowhere else.

You remember where we left off last week. We left the three disciples, Peter, John, and James and they were fast asleep on the mountainside. They're not gonna be looking at anything if they don't wake up. So that's what we're going to see, that they do wake up by the grace of God. And as we'll see in the rest of this account, their weaknesses are overcome by divine strength. All of their needs in this account are met with divine grace.

The disciples here, are the perfect picture of human need. We see ourselves in the disciples. We recognize our need is just like their need. We have needs. First, it's the need to wake up.

Verse 32, "Now Peter and those who were with him, they were heavy with sleep." That's a, that's an idiomatic saying. The verb is *bareo*, which means to be burdened, to be weighed down, to be heavy. It can mean that this person, the subject is, is awake but just extremely tired, overcome with fatigue. But here in the context it means, clearly, to be sound asleep, to be unconscious to the world, to be oblivious, fast asleep. So this is literal sleep, and it points to here really a physical limitation on behalf of the disciples, physical limitation.

But there is a spiritual component to this, as well. That's what we need to see here. The Bible often uses sleep as a metaphor, a picture of spiritual dullness. The Gospel writers show the disciples sleeping at various times in Jesus' ministry at various points to illustrate that very point. That they are spiritually dull and have need of spiritual strengthening. Jesus confronted their spiritual lethargy, their dullness, and he called upon them from time to time to stop sleeping, to wake up and to stay awake. A repeated theme in his teaching, Luke 12:37, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes." "Wake up!" Jesus says, "and stay awake!"

Mark 13:33, it's Peter, John, and James again, and they are with Jesus, and they ask him while he's on the Mount of Olives, ask him about the end times. They want to understand what's coming. They want to understand the signs of the end so they can be ready. Jesus told them here in the Olivet Discourse, "Be on guard. Keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come." Again, in verse 35, he says, "Stay awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning, lest he comes suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, stay awake."

The Apostle Paul picks up on the same theme in his writings. Wakefulness for the purpose of watchfulness, and Paul, metaphors that he uses to describe the whole attitude, really, of the Christian life. Christian life is, is described in terms, in many different terms, but in terms of, of wakefulness, of sobriety, of sober-mindedness, of watchfulness, of paying attention, of being on guard. Paul says, Romans 13:11, "You know the time. The hour has come for you to wake from sleep, for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed."

He tells the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:34, and these are Corinthians, by the way, who, if you read the whole letter to the Corinthians, they were asleep at the helm. They were sleeping at the wheel, and there was all manner of, of corruption and decay and sin and error and, and rank heresy right in the Corinthian church.

So Paul tells them in 1 Corinthians 15, after they were allowing people in their church denying the very principle of resurrection. Can you imagine that? Us having Sunday school classes taught by people denying the principle of resurrection? Bodily resurrection, you understand, doesn't exist, it's not real. What in the world? Paul tells them, "Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning." As a Christian, to, to be asleep is to be sinning. It's to allow the influence of false teaching to pervade and to have its way. It's to backslide into sinful error. So "Wake up!" Paul says, "Stop sinning!"

He uses the same language of waking up, staying awake, in the context of the second coming. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 and following. Paul writes this, "You are all children of light,

children of the day. We're not of the night or of the darkness, so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. Those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation."

Those who sleep, sleep at night, those who get drunk, get drunk at night. Ask any cop, and he'll tell you the crazies come out at night. That's not what the Christian, how the Christian is to be living, asleep, drunk. We're to be sober-minded, awake, watchful. We're children of the day, children of the light.

So the spiritual dullness of the disciples, here, is certainly on display. It's pictured, here, in their sleeping. Because of their lethargy, these men failed to see the unveiling happen, as it happened. They failed to see the arrival of Moses and Elijah in glory. They fail, failed to hear the conversation that was happening between the most important men who ever lived. Ah, bummer! But, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him.

What is that if not an indication of the grace of God? God was gracious. He is merciful here, that is, he allowed them to see something they wouldn't have been able to see. But he's also gracious. He has a plan to use this occasion to accomplish his own purposes through the unveiling of Christ's glory in the lives of these disciples. So the grace is empowering them. It's strengthening them. It's edifying them. It's lifting them up.

In fact, keep your finger there in, in Luke chapter 9, and go over to Ephesians chapter 5. I want to show you something there just briefly. Ephesians 5, very important connection between our context of waking up and seeing Christ's glory, and then what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5. He's talking about the, the privilege and duty of Christians to walk in love and holiness, and, and then also to walk in light and all the implications of that. In fact, he uses this waking up imagery as a metaphor, here in this context, for salvation itself.

In Ephesians 5:8, start reading in Ephesians 5:8, Paul says, "At one time you were in darkness," or you were darkness.

He's just basically saying, you as non-Christians, you were darkness, "but now, now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says," here's the quote "'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

That verse, as I see it, it's a direct allusion back to this scene at the transfiguration. "Awake, O sleeper." Wake up, Peter, John, James, wake up! Arise from the dead! And notice what it says, "Awake and Christ will shine on you." That language comes directly from Isaiah 60 verse 1, where it says, "Arise, shine! For the light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."

Paul replaced, when he quoted it in Ephesians 5, he replaced the word LORD, that is the divine name Yahweh, he

replaced Yahweh with Christ in Ephesians 5:14. The language comes from, from Isaiah 60 verse 1, but as justification for making the change from Yahweh to Christ, that comes from what we see in the transfiguration. The glory of the LORD, the glory of Yahweh, it's the glory of Christ pictured on the mountain.

Go back to Luke 9. So by God's grace, the sleeping disciples woke up. They saw Christ's glory, which is the glory of Yahweh. They saw his glory as well as the two men who are standing there with them, and Peter, once again taking the initiative. He's fully awake now. You've got to admit he's remarkable, remarkably quick-thinking, I really, I love that about Peter. But what he says here, it reveals a second need, which is a crucial need, even after he's awake.

He needed to wake up. Yes, but now he needs, second, we'll call this the need for clarity. The need for clarity, verse 33. As the men are parting from him, so he wakes up, and they're about to go away. So he's like, he, he, didn't even get the whole conversation, just, just the tail end, and now they're leaving. So he's like, I gotta to act! As the men are departing from Jesus, "Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good that we

are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, not knowing what he said.'”

That final little note, there, is a note from the author. It's a bit of commentary provided for us, the readers. Luke, the narrator, has given us some insight. He's helping us to see and interpret what's going on here. Peter spoke, here, not knowing what he said. That editorial comment can either mean that Peter was missing the mark, or it could mean that Peter spoke better than he knew. Perhaps there's a bit of both going on, here, because it's not as though Peter here is entirely wrong. His immediate impulse, in fact, seems to be exactly right.

It reveals a heart for the things of God. It reveals a desire for abiding there and remaining there with these people. He, he sees, Oh! I've got the three most important people on the planet ever in history right here. Let's, don't go anywhere! He's like, he's saying in his thinking, “Hey, if it's good that we are here, it's even better that we stay here. What can I come up with? Right impulse.

It still reveals a, a lack of clarity. That's evident in what follows. We can see several particular points of clarity that he lacked, but we'll boil it down to just two main issues: identity and importance. He lacked clarity about Jesus' identity and Jesus' importance. The disciples, here, they lack clarity about the identity of Christ, about his true identity. Namely, that he is an exclusively superior person. You see what Peter called him there, how he referred to him, Master? It's not that Peter is wrong in calling Jesus, Master. It's just that he's not right enough.

He failed to bring forward into this moment what he had so brilliantly confessed just a week earlier, verse 20. "You are the Christ of God." The term Peter uses here is *epistata*. It's like, it's like calling Jesus, boss. It's like saying, Hey, boss! Acknowledging him as the leader, he's the one in charge. Jesus is that. I mean, he's at least that. But Jesus is so much more than that, and this gives us again, insight into, into how Peter is thinking at this point. And it's the way he's thought from the very beginning and it keeps kind of revisiting him.

Have you ever had errors that you've sorted out in your life, and you like get clarity on it from Scripture, and then like a month later, you're like making the same error? Okay, it's just me, all right. He, he keeps making the same mistake.

Luke's gospel, whenever Peter and the others refer to Jesus as Master, it's interesting to do a little, little, trace that word *epistata* through Luke's gospel. It's an indication that they're not getting something. It's an indication they have, that there is something, here, that they're not seeing clearly, something that they desperately need to, learn.

They're out fishing in Luke 5:5, this is the first time. Peter called Jesus, *epistata*. Remember, Jesus said, Hey, um, throw your nets on this side of the boat. Right? They've been out all night, caught nothing, and umm Jesus says, Hey, throw them on this side of the boat. Peter, fisherman, lifetime fisherman, grew up on the lake, he knew all the ins and outs of every, every fishing spot, everything, everything about fishing, he knew.

Jesus, what is he? He's in the woodshop. He's a carpenter. Okay, *epistata*. Okay, *epistata*. I'll, I'll submit to you. You're the boss. I'm the disciple, you're the boss. I'll throw my nets on the other side of the boat. Remember what happened? Overwhelming catch of fish. And from then on, Peter saw that he was dealing with somebody else, he's dealing with someone holy, someone who's far superior to a carpenter. Peter's dealing with someone who's holy, and he immediately, right on the spot, he, he changes his address to Lord, *kurios*.

They're in the sea, in the middle of a terrifying storm, Luke 8:24, and the disciples, they came to Jesus, waking him up, saying, "Master! Master," *Epistata! Epistata!* "We are perishing!" After he rebuked the wind and the waves, restoring calm to the Sea of Galilee, they didn't, they weren't just dealing with a boss. They were dealing with the boss, the boss of the wind, the boss of the water, the boss of the earth.

Luke 8:45, the woman suffering with a flow of blood. She touched Jesus. Jesus knew it. He's, he's surrounded by crowds of people. Jesus knew it. He started looking for her, asks who's the one who had touched him. Peter sort of steps in, corrects

Jesus. Um, Master, like Hey, boss, don't, don't worry about it. Crowds surround you. They're pressing in on you.

Later in our chapter, Luke 9:49, there it's John who says *epistata*. He says, Master, *epistata*, boss. Hey, "we saw someone casting out demons in your name. We tried to stop him because he doesn't follow with us." He believes his master, his boss, approves of that partisan spirit. So by calling Jesus Master here, boss, *epistata*, in view of his actual identity, I mean, look, in view of his shining, brilliant glory, dazzling through his clothing, it reveals a view of Christ Peter had of Jesus' nature and his identity, that even in the face of evidence, right there, it's insufficient. He needed clarity on this point.

Leads to another point of clarity, not just about his identity, but also about Jesus' importance. His importance. The disciples lacked clarity about the importance of Christ, that namely, that he is exclusively superior. He is more important than anybody, more important than Moses and Elijah or anybody. He has the highest priority. And in terms of glory, he is absolutely unparalleled.

Again, notice what Peter said, verse 33, "Master, it is good that we are here." He may mean good in the sense of pleasant, satisfying, but considering what follows and his suggestion probably good means, Hey, it's advantageous that we're here; as in, hey good thing we're here, Master, because we're so useful to you. We're beneficial. Why is that? Because Pe, Peter, James, and John, they're, they're able to build tents. How lucky! How handy to have these guys with some skills here up on the mountain so close at hand! Build tents for them. It's good that we're here. It's beneficial to you that we're here. So he proposes an idea, "Let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

What's this about? Does he want more fellowship? Is that what this is about? Is he just wanting more fellowship? Or is there something else, here? The something else that may be here, some commentators see, that Peter is suggesting that they celebrate the Feast of Booths together. If this scene is taking place in the summer, and it's very likely it was, considering the fact that they were able to ascend Mt. Hermon. Something

that they could only do in the summer months because most of the months of the year Mt. Hermon was covered with snow.

Israel's Feast of Booths, which is happened around September, October, that wouldn't be too far away on the calendar. It would be coming up. Peter may be thinking about that. It may have prompted his suggestion. I'm personally not sure if that's what's happening, here, but let's go with that for a moment. The Feast of Booths, it was called the Feast of Tabernacles. Fancy way of saying, Feast of Tents. Three tents, let's have tents. Feast of In-Gathering, it was also called. You can read about this feast in Exodus 23, 34, Leviticus 23, Numbers 29, Deuteronomy 16. This is one of three annual feasts for all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem, and they're commanded to attend. They reaped bountiful harvests of the Promised Land, and as they did that, God wanted them to remember the lean years, the desert years, the times of want in the wilderness wanderings.

And so God told them, Leviticus 23:42 and 43, "You shall at this feast dwell in booths for seven days." That is, come out of your houses, your brick and your paneled houses, come out of

those houses and get in tents. Go camping. A lot of men are saying, Amen! Hey, how about a command for our church? Let's go camping! "You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land Egypt."

So the booths commemorated the tents Israel dwelled in, the encampment of the hosts of Israel as they moved from place to place. Perhaps some of you have looked at, maybe diagrams of how the camp was to be set up. The camp was to be arranged by tribe. The tabernacle is in the center, and then the tribes extended outwards in the four cardinal directions, three tribes in tents, they extended to the north, three to the south, three to the east, and three to the west.

Levites, they were in the inner circle of the camp but also arranged north, south, east, and west. Merorites were to the north, Kohathites to the south, Moses and the house of Aaron, they were to the east, and then the Gershonites to the west. But the tabernacle, that was set up at the heart and center of Israel's camp. And every time they pitched camp, every time, it

was a picture that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is dwelling in the midst of his people. At the very center of his people, with the tabernacle and the Holy of Holies at the center of the Israelite encampment.

So if Peter is thinking here, about the Feast of Booths, if he's kind of wanting to enter into a, an early celebration, like in view of this special visitation. It's certainly appropriate for Moses and Elijah to dwell in booths. I've always wondered, three booths, I guess he's thinking, "One for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah." Like what are Peter, James, and John going to do? Like bunk up? Or join them?

But it would be fitting for Moses and Elijah. Be fitting for Peter, James, and John, right? What about for Jesus? Does he join Moses and Elijah in booths? Really is, when you think about it, considering who Jesus is, considering his importance, it's utterly unfitting, completely inappropriate for Christ to take his place along with Moses and Elijah, circling the center of the camp.

Why? Because his place is in the tabernacle. His place is in the very center. He, in fact, is the one who passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies. Moses, Elijah, these apostles, everyone else are around him, as he is in the center. He is the object of worship. He is the way to God.

Having said that, let's back up and suppose that Peter is not thinking, here, about the Feast of Booths. I only mention it, even though I don't necessarily think that's what Peter is thinking, but I mention it because I think here Peter spoke better than he knew. I think he mentioned this and talked about it, and it brings into this text the imagery that we just talked about.

But if commemorating the annual feast is not the first thing that came up on Peter's mind, what was he after? What does he want? I think it's more basic, and it's really what the Feast of Booths is meant to commemorate, it's meant to show. I believe Peter wanted what every believing heart wants, going all the way back to Moses himself, who pleaded with the Lord God. Exodus 33:13, "If I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, that I may know you in order to find out how to have find

favor in your sight.” God responded to the cry of the believing heart of Moses, saying, verse 14, “My presence will go with you. I will give you rest.” Moses said, “If your presence will not go with me, don’t bring us up from here. I so long for you, O God.”

Moses, then, and Peter, now or here, they long for the glory to abide. They long for the glory to remain, to stay with them. They want the glory of God to tabernacle with them. As Peter woke up to witness the glory of Christ and to see Moses and Elijah, he didn’t, he didn’t want that to end. He wanted this whole thing to remain. He wanted them to stay. He didn’t want this experience to end and can you blame him? No!

That’s why this scene is the perfect picture here, of human need. There’s not only the weakness and frailty of our physical frame, overwhelmed and weighed down by sleep and weariness. There’s also the spiritual lethargy, the spiritual dullness that besets us because of sin. We feel the weakness all the time, don’t we, of our condition? Worse, we feel the effects of our sin nature. We feel the weight of our guilt. We feel the distraction that comes from enticements to sin. Some of those temptations are external to us. They have hooks inside of us

that relate to our past and habits of thinking, habits of wanting, habits of desiring, things that as a Christian are really no longer truly true of us.

At the same time, while we struggle with the frailty, we struggle with the sense of sin and distraction and all the rest, we have this internal sense of longing for spiritual reality, for divine glory. We're made for higher things. God created us to worship. God created us to gaze on divine glory. Solomon said, "God has set eternity in the heart of man." That means we're frustrated by that which is temporal. We're dissatisfied by that which is passing. We long for the, the God who created us, who loves us, who sustains us. That's why we all understand Augustine, who said, "Thou has made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

Just like Peter on this occasion, when we finally do wake up, when we finally do look to Christ, we find ourselves in such a desperate need for clarity all the time. We need continued teaching and instruction to know him for who he really is, to understand how precious he is to us. That continual reminder, which is, beloved, why we are here every single week and during

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the week as well. We need the reminder to know how wonderful he is and especially in comparison with the paltry offerings of the world. We need to see all the time, be reminded all the time, “as long as it is called today,” to remind one another, to provoke one another even. How completely sufficient he is, and how there is nothing else besides him.