

Transfiguration 2/15/15
Mark 9:2-9 B

INTROIT:
OUT OF ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD SHINES FORTH.

Six days after they had confessed Jesus to the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and Jesus said to them, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me," Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. Which mountain it is, we do not know, because the Bible does not tell us. But, it should not surprise us that Jesus leads them up a mountain, but a mountain is often where God comes to His people.

For example, Mount Zion in Jerusalem is where the Temple stood and that is the place on earth where God dwelt among His people. This was the place on earth God shines forth, the perfection of beauty. Isn't that what is happening at the Transfiguration when Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up that high mountain?

Take a look: There on that high mountain, you have Jesus who is God Himself in the flesh. And what is He doing? He is shining forth. He clothes are radiant, more white than what anyone on earth could bleach them to be. In other words, Jesus is shining forth in all of His unfettered, eternal, divine glory in front of Peter, James, and John, showing them who He truly is -- He is God in the flesh. He is showing them His glory, what He has looked like for all eternity, and what He will look like when He is risen from the dead. He is showing them what they themselves will reflect and look like when their cross-bearing days are over and they rest from the labors in heaven. What Jesus is showing them can be described in no other way that this is the perfection of beauty.

There's even more to it than that. Jesus is on the mountain, His divine glory shining forth in the perfection of beauty, He has some people with Him -- Moses and Elijah. And, Moses and Elijah are there to give witness to Peter, James, and John that their confession of Christ is correct. They indeed should be denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Him. They are witnesses to the fact that Jesus is all that the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament, have declared Him to be. So they stand on the mountain of transfiguration to point them to Jesus -- this One, who is shining forth in the perfection of beauty, is the perfect fulfillment of the Law for you, on your behalf. This One shining forth in the perfection of beauty, He is the one, true, perfect sacrifice for the sins of all the world.

And if there is any confusion as to what Moses and Elijah are testifying about Jesus on the mountain, God the Father Himself shows up and says, "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him."

And there's even more to it than just that. All that is being shown to Peter, James, and John is for them, for their benefit. It is all designed to strengthen them in their confession of Jesus as the Christ; to strengthen them in their resolve to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Jesus. Jesus is giving to them their perfection of beauty to encourage, strengthen them that they can go forward and do what it is that Jesus has called them to do.

We know this because of the way Mark tells the story. After six days, Jesus leads them up the mountain. He is transfigured before them, Moses and Elijah appear to them, the cloud overshadows them, and the voice from the cloud speaks to them. Them, them, them, them, them. This is designed for them. To strengthen them in their confession. To strengthen them to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Its all for them.

Well, good for them. But what about us? When you get right down to it, we are trying to do the exact same things Peter, James, and John were trying to do -- confess Jesus as the Christ. He has called on us to deny ourselves, take up on our cross, and follow Him. To do that, we could use the perfection of beauty. We could use seeing His shining forth in His glory so that we could be strengthened in our confession and resolve to follow Him. We could use that because denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus is a whole lot easier said than done.

If it was easy to do, we would have the perfection of beauty right here. God would truly shine forth in all we think, say, and do, because if we really were strong in our confession, if we really were denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus with all that we are, we would be perfectly keeping His Commandments. And God would shine forth in us, through us. It would be marvelous. But that's not what's happening because confessing Jesus, denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus is not popular today. That doesn't represent the world today. The world we live in says don't deny yourself, indulge yourself. Don't bear a cross, indulge your pleasures. Don't follow anyone; be independent. Confess yourself. And far too often, we follow the world, buy into that mindset and, when we do, its not beautiful, because what shines forth is our sin; the ugliness and imperfection in our lives.

And the only way to overcome all of that is for God do His work in our lives. That's what we need. The GOOD NEWS for us is that God shines forth. This is the mountain Jesus leads us to. After six days of the week, Jesus takes you by means of that font, that altar, this pulpit and He leads you to another mountain called Calvary. And there, on that mountain, God shined forth and you see the perfection of beauty. Upon that mountain, as

Jesus hangs upon that cross, clothed in the ugliness and imperfection of your sin, the entire world goes dark. But even there is Jesus shining forth as the one, perfect, beautiful sacrifice for all of your sins. There He shines forth in the unfettered glory as the One who has won for you the entire forgiveness for all your sins, earned you a place in heaven, promises you the resurrection of your body and everlasting life.

All of that is yours and there's more to it than that. For by means of that font, that altar, and this pulpit, Jesus gives you the perfection of His beauty, gives you strength to confess Him to be the Christ, and gives you all the strength and encouragement you need to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.

He does that by the way He speaks to you and the testimony that comes to you. For from the font, the altar, and the pulpit comes the testimony of Moses and Elijah, saying "Here is your Christ, the sacrifice for your sins, the One who will lead you to life everlasting." From that font, that altar, this pulpit, comes God the Father Himself speaking to you. And what does He say? "My Son suffered and died for you. He rose again for you. And because He did, all of your sins are forgiven. And, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. I will never leave you nor forsake you. No matter how hard it is to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me, you can do all things for I strengthen you."

He comes to you and says, "Take eat, this is My body; take drink, this is My Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." And what does His body and blood do for you? It strengthens you in your confession of Jesus, your true love for Me, and in your fervent love for one another.

You put all those things together and you know what you have? You have all the strength, all the encouragement, all that you need to confess Jesus to be the Christ, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. You put it all together and you know what you have? You have the perfection of beauty, with God shining forth.