

Sermon Title: "Access Granted"

February 14, 2021 – Transfiguration Sunday

Text: Mark 9:2-9

Theme:

What's in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Welcome to another Transfiguration Sunday. This is the day in the church calendar when we commemorate the event when Jesus' Divinity was revealed, but what is really going on here? This event in many ways was a continuation from previous events. Our choices for our Old Testament lesson for today are the story of Moses giving the law to Israel, *The Torah*, and Elijah being taken up to heaven in the whirlwind. These stories are stories of Israel's greatest lawgiver and Israel's greatest prophet. The Hebrew name for the Holy Scriptures is the *Tanakh*, *The Torah* (Law), *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (Writings). So, when Jesus mentions the Law and the Prophets, He is referring to Holy Scripture. These aren't the only two events that build up to this event though. We also have Jesus' Baptism. Remember we had the Dove descend on Jesus and the Father's voice saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him." With me so far? We're going to come back to it a little bit later.

So, Moses, if you recalled led Israel out of captivity, gave them God's Law, but had to veil his face following the event, and led Israel through the wilderness, but had to stop short of entering the land of Canaan due to Moses' sin. Aaron was also out due to his sin. I was just sitting here. "I have no idea how this golden calf appeared." Really? Give me a break! God didn't buy it either. So, Moses is permitted to climb Mt. Nebo, now in present-day Jordan, to peer into Israel, but he will have to hand the people of Israel over to another leader, Joshua, son of Nun. Our English Bibles added "son of Nun" to clarify that we were talking about Joshua vs. Jesus, because it's the same name in Hebrew. So, Moses gets to look into Israel, and he's staring right at where Jerusalem is today, but he dies shortly after coming down the mountain and he's believed to be buried on Mt. Nebo, but nobody is certain.

Then we have Elijah. What's so special about Elijah? He was one of two people taken directly up to Heaven without dying. Enoch was the other. Elijah performed many miracles and was regarded as Israel's greatest prophet. Many of his miracles foreshadowed the coming of Jesus. This is the location where this is believed to have occurred. It is also in Jordan and is called Tell Mar Elias. Elias is another



form of Elijah. Elijah was also foreshadowed to return someday. We now know that this is fulfilled in John the Baptist and at the Mount of Transfiguration.

So, fast-forward several hundred years and Jesus, Peter, and John climb what was traditionally believed to be Mt. Tabor. Some scholars favor Mt. Hermon, famous from the 1973 Yom Kippur War, but most scholars believe that it's Mt. Tabor. Anyway, Jesus, Peter, and John decide to go climb this mountain. It's a stunning view at the top, but in Jesus' case, the clouds roll in and then some really amazing stuff happens. Jesus' face shines bright, His clothes are bleached pure white, and Moses and Elijah show up. How Peter and John know that it's Moses and Elijah, I have no idea. Were they wearing name tags or aprons from Home Depot? I don't know, Scripture doesn't say, but somehow Peter and John know that it's Israel's greatest Old Testament heroes standing there with Jesus. No, this isn't *WandaVision*, it's a message that says that all of the Law and the Prophets points to Jesus, and at this point, it is literally doing that. Joshua, son of Nun, could lead Israel into the Land of Canaan, but he couldn't bring Moses in there. Finally, through another Yehoshua, (Jesus), Moses' access to Israel is finally granted. Do you see what Jesus has done here? Through Jesus, Moses finally gets to enter the promised land, and Elijah comes again.

Witnessing all of this is Peter and John and they are terrified. They know that Moses had to veil his face and now Jesus' face is shining like that! What would you say when you witness something like this? I bet you'd like to say something appropriate and profound. Something intelligent. That's what you'd like to say, but is that what Peter does? No, he feels he has to say something, and what he says sounds pretty silly, *"Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."* Really? How are you going to do that? After Peter opens his mouth, it the Father's turn. He shows up in the cloud and repeats what He said at Jesus Baptism, *"This is my beloved Son; listen to him."*

After that Moses and Elijah disappear and it's just Jesus, Peter, and John. Jesus then tells Peter and John not to talk about the experience until after Jesus is raised from the dead, so this event is essentially "classified."

There is a lot of Moses and Peter in all of us. We come to church. We try to follow the rules, but even though we try, we mess up. Even when we are simply a bystander to something amazing that God is doing, we feel that we must comment on it. We must put our two cents in. In reality we are granted access to the Father through Jesus. We don't have to say anything or do anything, we just need to receive the free gift that Jesus offers to us. Jesus restores hope.

Today is also a special day where we got to receive another child into God's family through Holy Baptism. This is a special day for him and for all of you who love him. I know you only want the best for him as he grows up to be a man. You'll be there as he takes his first steps. You'll be there as he says his

first words and for all of those milestones in life. But it's nice to know that even when he messes up, Jesus will be there right beside him all the whole time. Jesus restores hope, and I foresee a bright future for this young man in Christ Jesus.

Today we also commemorate the sacrifice of St. Valentine, who was executed by the Emperor Claudius, for performing Christian Marriages in defiance of the Emperor. Valentine went to his grave knowing that this isn't the end. He knew that Christian love was stronger than that and he knew that His Savior would make it all right.

So, from all of this, is there one thing that you can take away? Know that it all points to Jesus. Make Jesus the focal point of your life and you will have hope that will surpass anything. You don't have to say anything profound. You don't have to buy the most expensive box of chocolates you can find. Just be there and take in what Jesus has done for you.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.