

A 21 lb butterball turkey. Mashed potatoes, gravy. Dressing. The whole family finally together again. Everybody seems happy, not a care in the world. Pleasant conversation. Pumpkin pie with whipped cream for dessert. Yum. Oh, its good to be here. If this joyful moment could just last longer. But before we know it, its time to jump in our cars and head home. Or to be left with a sink full of dishes. The next day its back to work, back to school, back to the frustrations of life. That great dinner will soon be a distant memory. It will not help us as we face the battles of everyday life. Today we are going to travel to a mountaintop, not for a turkey dinner, but for an experience that will change our lives forever. And when we leave, what we have seen and heard, will be a great help to us as we head back to our day to day lives. Yes, Lord, with Peter, I am going to say today, "It Is Good To Be Here!"

We have all at one time or another or will oneday be in a doctor's office, when the doctor gives us the results of some tests on us or another family member. Your father or mother has cancer. Initially, we are in a state of shock. How can it be? This can't be happening to us. What are we going to do now? Jesus had just given his disciples a doctor's office bombshell. He had told them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." What a downer! Their master would be rejected by religious leaders and be killed. Something was needed to strengthen their faith- to help them deal with this tragic loss. So their Master lifted a corner of the curtain and gave them a glimpse of His divinity. They saw the glory and majesty that belonged to Him who is the King of Kings. Suddenly his clothes became a dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Matthew tells us his face did shine like the sun. This was a transfiguration-a supernatural change that took place in Him.

It is also good for us to remember what happened to Christ on that mountain. His glory will be our glory. Says the apostle Paul, Christ shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body". Here upon earth we see sin, unbelief, wickedness. WE meet people who reject Christ as the Son of God and sneer at His followers. Here we have crosses to bear tribulations to endure, sickness to suffer, conflicts to meet, disappointments to overcome, trials to test us. At times we are sick, or we must undergo a serious operation, or the course of true love does not run smooth, or friends turn against us, or we lose our job, or some misfortune strikes our children, or we suffer financial loss. Oh, who can number all the unhappiness that can come into our lives?

And when we, because of the cruel blows that life can deal us, become discouraged, let us be encouraged by the glory that is to come. With Paul let us say, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Looking back on the transfiguration, John could exclaim, And we beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only of the Father, full of grace and truth." Looking forward to heaven, we can say, WE shall behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Let this hope of future glory with Christ be our encouragement in times of sorrow and affliction.

Now while our Savior was thus transfigured, behold two men, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses was the leader of early Israel. God had given his Law to the Jews through Moses. Almost 15 centuries had rolled by since God had buried Moses in an

unknown grave on Mt. Nebo. Elijah was the spiritual leader of a small group of Israelites who had remained true to God in a time of great falling away. He was a mighty prophet of God. Over 900 years had passed since Elijah was whisked away to heaven in a chariot of fire. Yet now they were seen alive by Peter, James and John who also heard them speak. They no longer had their worn out earthly bodies, but they appeared in glory. Their bodies had been changed by God into beautiful glorified bodies.

Sometimes people ask me whether we will recognize our Christian husband, wife or children in heaven. The answer is definitely yes. As Peter James and John recognized Moses and Elijah so we will recognize our Christian loved ones in heaven.

Our text tells us that these two mighty men talked to Jesus about his departure. This word departure is especially chosen to include the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. The announcement that Jesus made to His disciples concerning his coming suffering and death on the cross was well understood in heaven by Moses and Elijah who represented the old patriarchs and prophets. They knew of the importance of Christ's suffering and death, for without it there could be no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, no eternal life.

All too often people suppose that those living in the Old Testament had a different way of salvation than we have today. It is true, they did not have nearly so clear a picture of God's plan of salvation as we have today, but they staked their hope of heaven on Jesus Christ, the Messiah who was to come. Abraham was saved through faith, and so was Moses and Elijah and Isaiah and all who ever were saved. The whole Jewish system of blood and the sacrifice of animals pointed to Christ, the lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Says the apostle Peter concerning Christ, "To Him all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the forgiveness of sins."

Let us be sure that we too, pin our hope of heaven on the departure which Christ was to accomplish at Jerusalem, and let us, as did Moses and Elijah, also talk about this wonderful event. When the hand of death knocks at our door, and the grim reaper from the other world stands at our bedside, then our sins will loom up before us in all their ugliness and all our so-called good works will not help. Then the one and only thing that will save us from hell and give us the key to the door of heaven will be faith in Jesus—faith in his departure which he accomplished at Jerusalem.

After this conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah concerning his coming death, these two great figures of the Old Testament started to leave. It was then that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good to be here; let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Here Peter seems to place all three on the same level as if they were equal. He wants a little cabin built for each of the three. Moses was a faithful servant of God. Elijah was a bold witness for the truth. But Jesus was far above either. An immense distance separated Christ from these mighty men of God, and a great gulf separates Christ from all teachers and whom God has given to men. Christ was the Savior to whom Moses and Elijah were pointing. Moses and Elijah were great men in their day, but still they were far below Christ. He was the true Sun; they were as moons bearing reflected glory. He was the truth; they were but witnesses of the truth. He was the Kings Son, they were but servants. Jesus Christ stands alone.

Now in some respects we are very much like Peter. He said, "Master it is good that we are here. Peter would have liked to have stayed on that mountain top, and he

would like to have kept Jesus there even though there was much work to be done in the world. He felt that it was much better to be thus carried, as it were, into a sort of third heaven than it was to be traveling to the cross. In other words, it was sort of an escape from the hard realities of life. All of us are tempted to avoid unpleasant duties and shrink from rough work, but it is not good to withdraw ourselves from life as it is. We all have unpleasant tasks to face, unwelcome situations to meet, rough work to do. And the thing for us to do is to follow the example of Jesus, to set our faces as flint and march toward our crosses, which are but tiny splinters of the cross that He bore.

Yes, there is work to do—much work and hard work for the Lord. All of us like this mountain-top Christianity, but few like to go down to the plains and work. We would rather live in a beautiful cabin on top of some majestic peak, surrounded by God's grandeur, than go down and work among people and speak to them about their soul's salvation, invite them to church, bring them to the New Life in Christ class, call on backsliding members, encourage the downhearted, renew the bond of love between those who have fallen out with each other, be peacemakers, and the like. Such work is hard work—it takes time, it takes patience, it means sacrifice on our part. But when we once realize the worth of a human soul and contemplate the horror of an eternity in hell for those who live and die without Christ, then we will leave mountaintop Christianity, and busy ourselves with work in the lowlands.

And now we read in our text, "And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone." Moses and Elijah had vanished. Peter had desired to keep them with Jesus, but that could not be. Their glory was to be swallowed up in Christ's. They came, they disappeared; Jesus remained and remains to this day. When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone."

Today you hear my voice, but my voice will be silenced in the grave even as the voices of those countless servants of the Lord who have come and gone before me. But the voice of Jesus will never be silenced. His voice was heard at creation when all things were made by the Word of His power. His voice was heard during the days of His ministry when He said to sinners, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." His voice was heard as he hung dying on the cross, saying, "It is finished." His voice will be heard on Judgment day, saying to the unbeliever, "Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." His voice will be heard saying to the believer, "Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." His voice will be heard forever in paradise as He opens to us new realms of thought and learning, of beauty and wisdom. May our voices be heard with the angels singing everlasting hallelujahs to his praise and undying glory. Amen.....