

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

[Jesus Only]

There are ten verses in today’s Gospel reading. Just ten.

Yet those ten verses are absolutely stuffed with layer upon layer of content.

There are about a billion ways to preach about the Transfiguration.

- We could focus on **Elijah**,
and how his appearance is connected to the great and terrible ‘Day of the Lord’
which is talked about so much in the Old Testament,
and realized on Good Friday.
- We could focus on **Moses**,
and how his shining appearance connects the original Exodus from Egypt
to the Great Exodus from death to life led by the Transfigured, shining Jesus.
And how Moses, who was not himself permitted to enter the Promised Land,
finally does so through Jesus.
- We could focus on **Peter**,
and how he consistently says the most absurd things,
even in a literal mountaintop experience,
missing the obvious work of God right before his eyes—not dissimilar to us.
- In a similar vein, we could focus on the tents or ‘**tabernacles**’ Peter wanted to build,
to celebrate the ‘Feast of Tabernacles’ and how silly it had become,
since God Himself had now taken on flesh to ‘tabernacle’ among us.
- We could focus on how Jesus’ **clothing** appeared
“intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them,”
just as He clothes us in the robes of His righteousness.
- We could focus on the clear **Baptismal** imagery
in how the events of the Transfiguration reinforce the events of Jesus’ baptism,
when the Father’s voice from heaven said:
“this is my beloved Son whom I love; listen to Him”
and how our unclean souls are brought, kicking and screaming, into new life.
- We could even focus on the **word** ‘transformation’ itself (*μεταμορφωσις* in the Greek);
how God shapes us sinners back into the saints He desires us to be through his **Word**.

Yes, there are many ways to see Jesus in this rich, complex text.

I encourage you to contemplate them, maybe even explore them on your own this week.

Today I want to call your attention to just two words at the end of verse 8:

*“And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but **Jesus only.**”*
Jesus only.

[Jesus Only is the *reason* to look up]

The disciples who were with Jesus that day would see *Jesus only*.

But first, Peter James and John witnessed a fraction of His glory.

they saw Him arrayed in whiter-than-white robes and talking with the dead.

And not just any dead—but Elijah and Moses, the two great prophets of Israel!

They saw what Jesus was really like—and they were rightly terrified!

Peter offers to *do something*.

From our perspective 2,000 years later, it may be easy to look down our noses at him.

Didn't he know that there is nothing we can offer to God?

Oh, Peter knew. Far better than we know.

After all—he saw the three shining figures with his own eyes!

He didn't offer to *do something* to glorify himself to these radiant beings,

But because he was afraid.

Mark says so:

"For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified!" (Mark 9:6)

At the Final Judgement, you will stand in the same place as Peter.

You will stand in the presence of God;

You would, as a sinner, have no reason to dare look up.

You would, as a sinner, know that God would see your unclean spirit.

You would be frightened.

And you would look down with shame and timidity!

The Holy Spirit, however, lifts our eyes to One who takes away our sin,

if we would merely have faith in Him: *Jesus only*.

Jesus only gives us a reason to look up; a Person in Whom to place our faith.

Jesus promises to stand in our place at the Final Judgement.

You will stand, in the presence of God;

You will recognize that you are a sinner and you have no reason to be where you are.

Yet you will know that God will not see your unclean spirit, but Christ's perfect spirit.

You will not be frightened.

You will look up in confidence and gratitude!

What a blessing the Scriptures are in hearing this Good News!

No matter which of the many angles we take to a text, we see Jesus!

You hear God's words of forgiveness,

And your heart and mind cannot help but want *Jesus only*!

His promises of the forgiveness of sins, new life and salvation comforts our frightened hearts!

[Jesus Only causes us to look up]

...Except for when they don't.

Except for the times your heart and mind do not want *Jesus only*.

The times His promises of forgiveness, new life and salvation seem far away.

The times when our faith seems too small or too feeble.

We do not have perfect faith.

We go through times when we fear and doubt.

Our "thankless hearts of stone" even cause others to fear and doubt.

Yet *Jesus only* has Good News for us here, too.

Jesus isn't only our *reason* to look up;

Jesus is the *cause* of our looking up.

Jesus only gives you faith, and *Jesus only* will perfect that faith.

Peter and James and John are remembered as great saints today, Apostles, martyrs.

But they were only with Jesus at His Transfiguration

because Jesus chose them to join Him!

It wasn't Peter or James or John who did the choosing, but *Jesus only*.

It is Jesus who causes us to see Him for what He is, as our Redeemer.

He chooses us.

He has chosen you and me and every soul in this world.

That was His ultimate message.

That was what He proclaimed from the Cross,

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

[Jesus Only guides our way]

The Transfiguration showed us a glimpse of God's glory,

But the Cross showed God's glory in its fulness.

That's where this story leads.

We know because we have the Scriptures, God's Word,

written by His apostles, whom He chose.

They recorded the message for us, which was spoken directly from God the Father:

"This is my beloved Son; listen to Him."

(Mark 9:7)

Jesus had told them how salvation was to be accomplished,

if they would only listen.

In Mark's Gospel, immediately before the Transfiguration,

and twice shortly following it,

Jesus foretold of His death and resurrection.

God the Father wanted the world to listen to what was going to happen.

Peter, James and John "looked around and they no longer saw anyone with them but *Jesus only*."

Their fears had faded away.

Now there was *Jesus only*.

They would continue listening to *Jesus only*.

But it would only be by following Jesus to the Cross
that Peter and James and John came to understand
the message they were listening to.

Only by actually seeing Jesus approaching Jerusalem,
only by listening to his word,

only by sharing His Body and Blood at His table,

only by seeing him arrested, condemned, humiliated, crucified,

only by seeing him raised from the dead,

only by sharing the Good News with others,

only then did they begin to understand

what they had heard and seen on the mountain.

Next week we will begin our own journey to the Cross, in the season of Lent,
keeping our eyes fixed on *Jesus only*.

Jesus only, who is our reason to look up.

Jesus only, who causes us to look up.

And *Jesus only*, who *empowers us* to look up and 'live up' to His desires for us.

Let Lent be a time to listen to *Jesus only*.

Stop 'looking down' to death, but to 'look up' to God's mercy.

Cut out some your worldly distractions.

Spend more time with the Scriptures.

If that seems a difficult task, remember that it's only 40 days.

Share the Good News of *Jesus only* with others.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
