

## "It Is Good That We Are Here" Transfiguration 2022

Dear beloved of the Father,

It is good that we are here—very good indeed. For just as God opened the kingdom of heaven to give Peter, James, and John a glimpse of its glory and what was waiting for them—what awaits all of us at the Resurrection—on the mountain of Transfiguration, He opens heaven to us in the Divine Service. In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit you were baptized into the kingdom of heaven. Every time you hear those words, God's very name given to you and indelibly stamped upon you, God is declaring again that in His infinite mercy He has opened the kingdom of heaven to you and all who believe and share the same Baptism.

That makes it good that we are here, is that here God has chosen to gather us to speak to us—not with a disembodied voice booming from a cloud of overshadowing light, but with the voice of one of the countless ministers of the Word He has sent into the world and will continue to send until Jesus comes again in all His glory to judge the living and the dead.

But while the voices in such places at their best lack the majesty and glory and awesomeness of that voice on the Mount, the message they speak is the same. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." And if it is not, if the message deviates from the

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proclamation that Jesus is here, even in the flesh, to save you, then it is not the voice of God at all. If the worship is not the temple of Jesus body, the Word of God made flesh to dwell among us, opening the place He has prepared for us to live for eternity, it is not worship acceptable to God or beneficial to us. In short, it is not remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy, but despising preaching and His Word rather than gladly hearing and learning it.

Witness Peter. Yes, Peter. You don't have to go the pagan places of worship with their carved idols and temple prostitutes to witness idolatry. You don't have to go to the Roman marketplace where they worshipped a pantheon of gods. You don't have to look around today at the vast array of false religions that place family or hearts aflame with love as the be all and end all. You don't have to look at the ideologies of our time that replace God with the corporate will and work of the village, the government, or political saviors.

No, Peter, rock that he was, shows us how idolatry proceeds from the hearts of men—even men of the church. "If you wish, I will make three tents [tabernacles] here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." His was the same idolatrous idea that spawned the golden calf. The same idolatrous sin as that of Adam & Eve. The same idolatry that too often infiltrates our own churches and worship lives.

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Everybody wants to build a tabernacle, a veritable temple to God. But, as Paul told the Romans in the marketplace of the Aereopogus in Athens, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:24-25)

And as Jesus rebuked the devil himself quoting the Scriptures of Moses: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

But as Peter gives us an example of idolatrous thinking, he also gives us an example of faith. Notice he prefaces his offer, with these words, "If you wish. "

And, of course, we can never forget the answer he gets to that. It comes from the Father Himself, for Jesus is come to do His will and He will not have us forget that. "He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'"

WOW!!! Talk about being cut short and put in your place. Here they are trying to do something for their Lord offering their very best

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effort and the Father's voice thunders from above, ignoring and dismissing their words and work, and directs them to listen to His Son.

Yet, we are always tempted to want more than the hearing, more than the Word of God. So, God's voice breaks into our world with the preaching of His Law, to terrify us and lay us flat. He takes the wind (the breath, the spirit) right out of us and renders us silent, like Peter, James, and John with the realization that "all our righteousness deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6) And only then are we ready to really see, and hear, and receive Jesus as He is, as He gives Himself to us, as we need Him--hidden now in the rather less than glorious looking things of His Divine Service of Word and Sacrament—where [Jesus comes and touches us and says], 'Arise, and do not be afraid.'":

- in Baptism where we are united with Him in His death and resurrection and made beloved sons of God;
- in the hearing of His Word preached into the ears of congregations great and small, as well as to the ears of individuals who confess their sins and faith privately to their pastor;
- in the eating of His body and drinking of His blood at His holy Supper.

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In all these things Christ gives you through the work of the Holy Spirit in His holy Christian Church, "When [you lift] up [your] eyes, [see] no one but Jesus only."

Thus Peter proclaims in today's Epistle reading, as per Luther's translation and commentary:

16. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, 18. we heard this voice come from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Here St. Peter refers to our Gospel account of the Transfiguration of Our Lord according to Matthew....

Now this is what St. Peter wants to say: What I preach to you about Christ and His coming, the Gospel we proclaim, has not been made up or invented by us. Nor has it been taken from clever writers of myths, who know how to speak splendidly about everything (as the Greeks did in that day). For these are purely fables, fairy tales, and idle talk, which they cleverly fabricate and in which they try to be wise. We did not listen to such people. Nor did we follow them; that is, we do not

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teach trumpetry of men, but we are certain that our message is from God. We saw it with our eyes and heard it with our ears, namely, when we were on the mountain with Christ and beheld and heard His glory. But His glory was evident when His face shone like the sun and His garments were as white as snow. Furthermore, we heard a voice from the Most Sublime Majesty say: "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him."

Now every preacher should be so sure of having and preaching God's Word that he would even stake his life on this, since it is a matter of life for us. He should not be in doubt. Now no man is so holy that he would dare die on the strength of the doctrine he himself has taught. Therefore, it is established here that the apostles were assured by God that their Gospel was God's Word. And here it is also shown that the Gospel is nothing else than a sermon about Christ. Accordingly, one should listen to no other sermon; for the Father wants no other sermon. "This is My beloved Son,..."

For Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is Himself the very object of saving faith. As His name declares, The Lord is salvation. Therefore, seeing only Jesus for salvation unto eternal life, and trusting that He is enough, is the very definition of saving faith. Seeing only Jesus with your eyes of faith means you have been delivered into the kingdom of heaven, for that is where Jesus lives and reigns to all eternity at the

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right hand of God, from where He sends the Holy Spirit to gather you in His church to keep you with Him as He forgives you all your sins

So you, dearly beloved of God, It Is Good That We Are Here—receiving that forgiveness of sins and eternal life—in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen