

March 24, 2019

Series: One Day

“Glory Before Departure”

Luke 9:28-36

Nobody lived each and every moment like Jesus. He knew that to make the most of every moment one had to live in the present-tense; He knew that though He and His Father stood outside of finite time, they loved humanity too deeply and had to enter time and space to be with us; He knew that worshipping in the presence of His Father or getting the word out about His Father’s grace and mercy was always time well-spent; He knew that His Father wasn’t slow but patient; He knew how to “make the most” (Ephesians 5:16) of each day. As we talked about in our recent **24** series, Jesus lived each 24-hour day to the fullest.

Now – for Lent – we are looking in the Gospel of Luke at some of the actual 24-hour days Jesus lived. We’re on a journey with Jesus, travelling **One Day** at a time. We’ve already looked at “One Day” when Jesus healed and forgave a paralyzed man whose friends brought him to Jesus. (Luke 5:17-26) Last Sunday, Jason reminded us that Jesus is in control – even during our stormy Days. (Luke 8:22-25)

Our passage this morning from Luke doesn’t start out “One Day” but “About 8 days later/after these sayings . . .” [Matthew and Mark say it was six days later. Either way, in a few minutes we’ll take a look at what Jesus said 6/8 days prior.] This particular moment has become known as The Transfiguration. And it’s a glorious moment; so glorious Peter suggests celebrating it and ‘holding on to it’ – so it will never be forgotten. Lord, how about if we build three holy shrines? (Luke 9:33)

Who can blame Peter for blurting this out? What a moment! Jesus, radiant with light, is hanging out with Moses and Elijah, two of the ‘heavy hitters’ for the people of Israel. Can you imagine being one of three eye-witnesses to this event?

Are some of you struggling to believe this really happened? I get it; some things in the scriptures seem highly unlikely – beyond what we could ever expect or imagine.

I find a different part of this passage even more unbelievable. It’s not Jesus being transfigured or being enveloped in a cloud while the Father declares His true identity: “Beloved Son.” It’s the very last half of the last verse in the passage: “They kept silent and . . . told no one any of the things they had seen.” (Luke 9:36b) Can any guy keep cool stuff like this to himself? [Actually, Matthew and Mark both add that Jesus told them not to tell anyone until later.]

So what exactly happened up on that mountain? And why Moses and Elijah? Let's start with that question. What's the significance of those two showing up?

Let's go back to the earliest days of Jesus' teaching and healing ministry when He delivers what has come to be known as The Sermon on the Mount. Luke has a version of this sermon in chapter 6, but Matthew has a more extensive transcript which includes, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) Jesus says this because He knows the religious experts think He wants to do away with ALL of the Law and the Prophets. Moses and Elijah represent the Law and Prophets more than anyone else. And here they are with Jesus, not chastising and questioning Him but having a conversation. Law and Prophet and Jesus, all together in one cohesive whole. This moment in time is more than just a feel good experience. It is a declaration that Jesus is the "fulfillment" of all that was done, said and promised long ago.

So they are having a conversation. But they aren't talking about the glory and enthronement and victory that's right around the corner. Matthew and Mark don't mention the nature of the conversation, but Luke does. It's just one word. But it's an important one. It's crucial to understanding the whole nature of the Good News of Jesus. Luke says that Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about His Departure once He gets to Jerusalem. The word that Luke uses is literally His Exodus – a euphemism for His suffering and sacrificial death.

I'm not sure Peter is as excited about celebrating and remembering this detail. He's excited about the Glory, but not the Departure. And that's what makes Peter just like the rest of us: we love Glory, but not so much the Suffering and Sacrifice. We want the trophy without paying the price.

Can you imagine a basketball player who wants to win the NCAA tournament but not practice much? Or a student who wants good grades without doing a lot of homework? Or a choir that wants to put on a spectacular concert without too many rehearsals? Or a young couple who wants to own a home without being frugal enough to pay a mortgage? We might laugh at these examples, but it's true that we're all for the glory, but not the sacrifice it will require.

We're like the bride and groom at most weddings. Weddings are full of glorious moments. It's the One Day that some people have looked forward to for years; the One Day we want to hold on to and remember. So we spend a bunch on photographers and videographers. We even save the top layer of the wedding cake for a whole year so that we can relive the moment of our weddings – even though the cake tastes terrible by then. We promise to never forget this glorious moment when we turn toward each other and make significant promises; promising we will hold onto this moment and this marriage "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." But we're not really thinking about the suffering and the sacrifice of

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marriage. In fact, most young couples are pretty sure there won't be much suffering and sacrifice in their marriage. "We're different!" We don't hire wedding photographers to capture the suffering and sacrifice of marriage. It's all about the Glory.

Do you ever catch yourself wanting to be close to Jesus without having to sacrifice like Jesus? Jesus is bent on making sure His followers hear about the suffering and sacrifice stuff, His Departure after this mountaintop Glory.

Remember I told you we would take a look at what Jesus said 8/6 days earlier? Well, He was pretty clear about His Departure at that time as well. Just after Peter made the **glorious** declaration that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 9:20), Jesus goes on to say "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (Luke 9:22) And then He goes on to talk about carrying a cross and losing one's life – the hard stuff.

Thankfully, Jesus didn't turn away from the hard stuff. He didn't tell Moses and Elijah to stop talking about His Departure. He didn't say, "Guys, do we really have to talk about the negative stuff now? Let's focus on the good stuff. The Glorious stuff." No, that's not what Jesus said. He was as committed to His Departure (His suffering and sacrifice) as He was to anything else. In fact, He would even say that His Departure was the "Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets." When broken, the Law demanded a sacrifice. And Prophet after Prophet promised an exiled people that a Savior was coming. Jesus was determined to fulfill all things needed for the salvation of God's people.

We don't know how many days later it was, but Luke says that "When the days drew near for Him to be taken up [Depart/Suffer], He set His face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51) He was determined to love us right up to the bitter end . . . for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse.

Jesus kept His vows to us, knowing ahead of time how poor we are, how sick we can get, and how bad our "worse" can be. That's some kind of Bridegroom, isn't it? Actually, what the Voice declared about Jesus from the cloud was that He was the "Beloved and Chosen Son" (Luke 9:35), and that we should listen to Him . . . follow Him **One Day** at a time . . . and live the rest of our days in His name . . . whether each day brings Glory or Suffering.

The Day for Jesus' Departure (His Exodus) did come. But it wasn't on the Mountain of Transfiguration. It was on a little hill called Golgotha; Place of the Skull. Though there was nothing Glorious about it, He endured every grueling moment right up to the less-than-Glorious ending. Why? SO THAT we could be set free – experience an Exodus of our own – from something much more powerful than Pharaoh: **the tyranny of sin.**

All of us are under the stranglehold of sin. We can't seem to shake it, as hard as we might try. My question for all of us this morning – those who do not yet believe as well as those who do believe in Jesus as Savior – do you think you can take care of sin without Jesus? Even those of us who are comfortable in the Church, who would say we have a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior have this nasty habit of trying to manage our own sin. We'll try harder, do better, read our Bibles more, sin less. It doesn't work; which is why Jesus came.

And for those who do not yet believe; I want to ask you a question – and I do not mean to be disrespectful or demeaning. I just want to be direct: If you are trying to live your life without Jesus, do you really want to go One More Day without someone like Him? Someone willing to embrace Departure more than Glory . . . for you?