

<sup>28</sup> **About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.** <sup>29</sup> **As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** <sup>30</sup> **Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.** <sup>31</sup> **They spoke about his departure,<sup>[a]</sup> which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** <sup>32</sup> **Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.** <sup>33</sup> **As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)**

<sup>34</sup> **While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.** <sup>35</sup> **A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."** <sup>36</sup> **When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.**

#### Listen to Him!

What impressive sights they saw! Can you imagine it? Jesus invited Peter, James, and John up a mountain with him. And Jesus did what he often did – prayed into the wee hours of the night. And the disciples did what they often did – fell asleep while Jesus was praying.

But the sights they woke up to! Sights so wonderful even Luke the doctor struggles to find words to describe it; Jesus appearance became "something else," he writes. As he's praying, he starts shining with the glory that was his as God. He's shining so brightly that not even his clothes can contain the light – he looks like this constant flash of lightning. Then it gets more glorious: Two believers who centuries earlier had entered heaven's glory – Moses and Elijah – appeared with him in **glorious splendor**. Then it gets even *more* glorious – so glorious that these sinful men are terrified. God the Father descends in a glowing cloud that envelops them all.

Yes, they saw wonderful things on that mountain top. But did you notice what the Father said? **"This is my Son...listen to him."** He didn't say, "Look at him!" But, "Listen to him." In other words, this wasn't just a light show. The takeaway, the lesson, the last thing wringing in their ears when the lights go off and all is back to normal is: "Listen to him."

In fact, the visuals were just an exclamation point on it. Jesus' glory? He's your God...so listen to him! Moses and Elijah? They listened to Jesus, and look where they are now! So...listen to him! It was a sermon God was driving home through all five senses...

And do you know why he did? Because that's exactly what the disciples had been struggling to do – listen to Jesus. Luke connects this account with what happened about a week before: **About eight days after Jesus said this...** Do you know what Jesus said? Something the disciples didn't want to hear. He told them the plan: That he'd soon head up to Jerusalem to suffer many things, be rejected by his own, and killed. They didn't like that plan. Instead of listening, Peter started correcting Jesus: "Never Lord!" Then Jesus shared his plan for his followers: Not only would he carry a cross....everyone who followed him would, too. **Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.**

But maybe we have the same problem: When our plans don't match Jesus', we stop listening. The plans we have for our lives – what do they look like? As little hardship as possible, right? We'd love it for life to be nothing but mountaintop moments. But then Jesus goes and says things like: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." We'd love it if following Jesus were comfortable and convenient and meant me getting all I want. And then Jesus goes and says the only way to follow him is the opposite – it's the cross. It's hard, it hurts, means denying what you want for what Jesus wants.

And we don't like to hear that. We like it even less when we're experiencing it. And so sometimes we stop listening. When our struggle against a temptation isn't going away and isn't getting any better, we stop listening to Jesus...and stop struggling. When what he calls us to do or say could cost us more than it benefits us, we sometimes ignore what he has to say. When love in a marriage becomes hard, instead of shouldering the cross and showing love anyway, we start to entertain an easier way out. When Jesus leads us into a dark valley of pain or sadness, and for all we pray it just gets darker, instead of listening and submitting we might be more like Peter – dictating to Jesus what he should be doing for us.

He does it again on this mountain, doesn't he? A bit more politely, but all the same. He says: **Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.** Maybe Peter thought he had a good plan. No cross, no valleys, just more glory on the mountain! But...did you hear what Luke had to say about that plan? Yeah, he didn't know what he was talking about. Clearly not! If Jesus stays in the glory where he belongs, then it is forever a place where we sinners don't belong. If Jesus stays on that mountain, then we'd only know what filled Peter's heart when that cloud of God's glory came too close for comfort – fear. Fear of God's punishment for our sins.

So, isn't it beautiful to hear what Jesus was saying on that mountain? With Moses and Elijah, what was he talking about? **His departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** He wasn't talking about how good it was to be enjoying the glory that was his. He was talking about leaving it behind and heading to Jerusalem where he'd die.

And he didn't just talk about it. It's the most wonderful sight on the mountain: **When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone.** He does the same thing he did when he came from heaven to earth – sets aside the glory that was his. For the same reason – he loves you. He loved you enough to walk down the mountain in humility that day. He loved you enough to walk up a hill, carrying a cross, six months later. He loved you enough to trade his glory for the shame of your sins there, to suffer the punishment you fear there...to take your sins away and make you fit for heaven. To win you something far better than a few years of mountaintop moments here. To win you perfect, permanent glory in heaven.

Jesus showed his glory on the mountain so his disciples could see it at the cross. To be sure, it was hidden there. Instead of shining like the sun, sun stopped shining. Instead of showcased between Moses and Elijah, he's crucified between two criminals. Instead of hearing the Father's approval, he's crying out that the Father has forsaken him. He seemed the helpless victim, the loser. But he's not! He's the God who can shine like lightning! He's the God who told us it would happen so! Which means he's not the helpless victim, but the willing sacrifice; that he could have saved himself, but chose to save me; that everything was going according to his plan, and his plan was to save. Jesus showed his glory on the mountain so that at the cross we can see the glory of his love.

But it also helps us see the glory of his love in our crosses, and sending us days in dark valleys. Struggle and sadness seem like the worst plan for our lives. But would the Jesus who suffered the cross for you ever will something bad for you? They seem like the least glorious times in our lives...but so did Jesus hours on the cross. And yet they were his most glorious – him loving you and saving you! Could it be that the same is true of the crosses and trials he sends us? That's Jesus, loving you and keeping you saved? That it's then when he's leading you to cling to his cross more tightly, and leading you to long for the glories of heaven?

I've often wondered why Jesus chose Moses and Elijah to appear with him in glory that day. I used to think it was because they were Old Testament greats. But the more I think about the context, the more I think he had a different reason. It was to encourage cross-bearers with a view of the glory that's waiting for us.

Think about it. Moses earthly life wasn't all that glorious. Oh, sure, he had his mountaintop moments; parting the Red Sea, seeing God's glory on Sinai. He had more valleys, though. He had Israel worshipping the Gold Calf at the foot of Sinai. He had the cross of loving and leading Israelites who constantly grumbled and complained against him. 2,000,000 of them. For 40 years. In the desert. And what did it all get him? It kept him close to his Savior. And where is he now? Basking in the **glorious splendor** Jesus won for him.

Elijah's earthly life was perhaps less glorious. Oh, sure, he had his mountaintop moments; that contest on Mt. Carmel, where God rained fire from heaven, showed Israel he's God. But he had more valleys. He lived for years in hiding, because a godless king and queen wanted him dead. He had to carry the cross of continuing to preach to a nation that refused to listen - at one point, that cross nearly crushed him into despair. And what did it all get him? It kept him close to his Savior. And where is he now? Basking in the **glorious splendor** Jesus won for him.

Your life might not seem glorious. You'll have your mountain-top moments, just like they did. You'll probably spend more days in dark valleys, like they did. You'll certainly have a cross to carry, and at times it will press hard. What will they get you? They'll keep you close to your Savior. Where will you be soon? Exchanging your cross for a crown, and joining Moses and Elijah...and Jesus in glorious splendor he won for you in heaven. As Paul put it: "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us a glory that far outweighs them all."

Until you get there, let the Father's main point ring in your ears: "This is my Son...*listen to him.*" Don't stop listening to Jesus. He doesn't just tell you to carry a cross, but gives you words of forgiveness for the times you haven't, words of refreshment that strengthen the weary. Don't stop listening to Jesus. He doesn't just promise you dark valleys, but that he walks through them with you, and will soon bring them to an end. Permanently. Don't stop listening to Jesus; keep on listening to Jesus. Amen.