



Office of the President
3015 Ave K NW
Winter Haven FL 33881
863.299.4084

PRESIDENT'S LETTER - MARCH 07

Down from the mount of glory Came Jesus Christ our Lord.
Recall the wondrous story, Rich gem in sacred Word.
Again your faith will view Him In **double glory** here;
The greater homage due him Will in your life appear.
(CW # 97 "Down from the Mount of Glory" text Werner H. Franzmann)

Transfiguration Sunday stands as the bridge between the glory of the season of Epiphany and the glory of Lent. During Epiphany we see Jesus reveal His glory as of the only Son of God and the promised Messiah of God's chosen people. During Lent we see this Jesus die at the cross after being handed over to the Romans by the religious leaders of His own people. It was necessary for Jesus to be the holy Son of God so that He could atone (pay for) all the sins of the world. It was also necessary that Jesus lay aside His glory and become obedient unto death even death on the cross. Matthew 16 is one of those key or pivotal chapters in the Bible. In one breath, Jesus is confessed as the promised Messiah and the Son of God. In the next breath, Jesus speaks of the divine necessity of His suffering many things and being killed.

1. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth Who reveals His glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration?

Transfigured Christ, the lowly, Stood radiant in the light,
Light found in the God-head solely, For human eyes too bright.
Then came a voice from heaven, Confirmed what here we see;
The words "my Son" were given To seal his deity.

First of all there is the answer of those who are thinking the things of men. There were many "human" opinions about who this Jesus was. Some were pretty flattering. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" He got a wide range of answers. Some people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life. John the Baptist, that preacher of repentance, had been executed by King Herod. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah, whom Malachi spoke of coming to prepare the way for the Messiah. Still others impressed by His preaching thought that He was the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah or at least one of the other prophets. All of these answers missed the mark.

Today there are also many diverse answers to the question, "Who do people say that Jesus, the Son of Man, is?" Many religions of the world such as Islam and Mormonism speak of Jesus as a great prophet or a great teacher. Many speak of Jesus as a man ahead of His time. Others speak of Jesus as a misunderstood teacher. Jesus is also claimed to be an example of how to love your fellow man.

Secondly, there is the answer of those who are mindful of the things of God. Jesus then turned to the disciples with the most important question, "But who do you say I am?" Peter answered for the disciples and confessed, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." This was the

correct answer. Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. He also was revealed as the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Peter and the other disciples believed that the glory of God was revealed in the person of Jesus. This answer does not come by human reason or strength. This answer is given by the Holy Spirit who creates faith in the hearts of believers. God reveals these things through His Spirit. "Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:17)." God reveals to you today through the Scriptures that Jesus is your Messiah and the Son of the living God. This glory was confirmed on the Mt. of Transfiguration in Matthew 17.

2. What had Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, come to do at Mt. Calvary?

Yet mark this glory hidden! See him the mount descend
And, by the Father bidden, His willing footsteps bend
To seek humiliation In deepest depths of woe,
To suffer degradation No mind can probe or know.

Again, the answer of those who are mindful of the things of men is short-sighted and self-serving. The conclusion of Peter was that if Jesus were the Messiah and the Son of God, then He would drive out the Roman legions and establish an earthly kingdom in which Peter and the other disciples would share the glory and riches. Peter had the effrontery to rebuke Jesus when Jesus spoke of the necessity of the cross. Peter told Jesus, "Far be it from You, Lord, this shall not happen to you!" Jesus rebuked Peter in some of the harshest words in His ministry. "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men (Matthew 16:23)." Peter was thinking in human terms.

Many today also think of Jesus and His work in human terms. They think of Jesus as a Savior who will make a better world, a Jesus who will make them rich and prosperous, a Jesus who will heal all their physical ailments. The modern evangelical movement promotes a theology of glory in terms of numbers and growth. As pastors we also are tempted to build our shrines to capture the glory of the moment. In our ministries we need to go back to the cross and see the glory of the Gospel. This Lenten season it is our privilege to proclaim the hidden glory of the cross.

Strange how his journey ended! In love that is his fame
Our Lord again ascended A mount - the hill of shame.
Upon the cross he proffered Himself in agony;
His holy soul he offered To set the guilty free.

God's ways are different because God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways, for God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21)." The glory of Jesus' ministry was to go to Jerusalem and be killed. Nothing could be clearer. Jesus told His disciples that as the Messiah and the Son of God, it was necessary for Him to suffer many things and to be killed and to be raised the third day.

Then hail the **double glory** Of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
And let this wondrous story Full peace and joy afford!
The holy mount acclaims him The majesty divine;
Mount Calvary proclaims him Redeemer - yours and mine.

Preach this double glory to the glory of God.
John Schierenbeck