

Notes for Next Sunday
Transfiguration Sunday

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Exodus 24:8-18). The setting for this text is God getting the Israelites ready for the journey to the Promised Land. He is making a new covenant with Israel. Blood was an integral part of the covenant making ceremony. In this case it made the Israelites clean and gave them forgiveness. Blood was always a part of the forgiveness rite (animals in the OT and Jesus' crucifixion in the NT). The leaders of Israel were invited up to the mountain. The sapphire at God's feet is a reminder of the picture of heaven in Revelation 21. Being at the feet of God, indicates that they did not see the full glory of God. Having Moses go up to receive the tablets of stone (The Law) with a great cloud fits with our gospel lesson about the Transfiguration.

Epistle (2 Peter 1:16-21). Peter is remembering his, James and John's Transfiguration experience where they saw Christ's glory. What they saw and heard now gives Peter courage to boldly proclaim Christ. This also assures him that this was an affirmation of what the OT writers foretold. All this culminates in Peter asserting that the Scriptures are not the work of men but of the Holy Spirit inspiring them and that the Bible is totally the Word of God.

Gospel (Matthew 17:1-9). . The chief purpose of the transfiguration in Matthew's Gospel is to proclaim the true identity and glory of Jesus, so as to undergird and support Jesus' difficult teaching about the cross. This glorious Jesus is one of who has begun to teach about God's unexpected way of salvation. His teaching is true, and the Father's voice from the cloud emphatically commands Jesus' disciples both then and now, "Listen to him!" (17:5). One day, this glorious One will return, and judgment will be given. Until then, "listen to him!" (CC pp. 851-852)

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Exodus 24:8-18

⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction."¹³ Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God.¹⁴ He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them."¹⁵ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it,¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud.¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

24:9 Nadab and Abihu. Aaron's two oldest sons. Nadab would have succeeded Aaron as high priest, but he and his brother died because they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (see Lev 10:1-2; Nu 3:4). (CSB)

24:9 seventy ... elders. Cf. Nu 11:16; perhaps representing Jacob's 70 descendants.) (CSB)

24:10 *saw ... God*. No one could see God and live, but the elders did not die. The Lord is never described physically in this passage, but Moses describes the place where the Lord appeared. (TLSB)

24:11 *ate and drank*. A covenant meal (cf. Ge 26:30; 31:54), celebrating the sealing of the covenant described in vv. 3–8. It foreshadows the Lord’s Supper, which celebrates the new covenant sealed by Christ’s death (see 1Co 11:25–26). (CSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Peter 1:16-21

¹⁶We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1:16 cleverly invented stories. Peter’s message was based on his eyewitness account of the supernatural events that marked the life of Jesus. It was not made up of myths and imaginative stories as was the message of the heretics of 2:3. (CSB)

1:16 coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ’s transfiguration the disciples received a foretaste of what his coming will be like when he returns to establish his eternal kingdom (Mt 16:28). (CSB)

1:17 eyewitnesses of his majesty. Peter, along with the other apostles, was an eyewitness to Jesus, the Son of God, who came in the flesh. (TLSB)

1:19 the day dawns. Day of Christ’s return. (TLSB)

1:20 Biblical authors wrote not what they thought or interpreted of the times but what God inspired them to write for their time and all of time. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 17:1-9

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ⁴Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

17:1 six days. Indication that Peter’s confession of faith and the transfiguration are closely connected. (TLSB)

17:1 Peter, James and John. Three of the first disciples called (4:18–22). Jesus selected them several times to be with Him at key moments (26:37; Mk 5:37). (TLSB)

17:1 high mountain. Possibly Mount Tabor or Hermon. Mountains were common sites for significant events: temptation (Mt 4:8), sermon (5:1), prayer (14:23), feeding of 4,000 (15:29); God revealed Himself to both Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai (Horeb; Ex 19:3; 1Ki 19:8). (TLSB)

17:2 he was transfigured. Gk *metamorphoomai*, “to change into a wholly different form or appearance” (Eng “metamorphosis”). Christ’s human appearance became dazzlingly bright as He displayed His divine glory. (TLSB)

17:3 Moses and Elijah. The great lawgiver and the outstanding prophet were representative of the OT Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets (5:17; 11:13). (TLSB)

17:4 Lord is good for us to be here. Peter may have felt as though he and his fellow disciples were almost in heaven. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

17:4 three shelters. See notes on Mk 9:5 (Peter may have desired to erect new tents of meeting where God could again communicate with his people (see Ex 29:42).

17:7 came and touched them. He approached them and not vice versa. Because of our sins and sinfulness we are afraid to approach him. But he mercifully comes to us. This is like a parent touching a frightened child. On the last Day believers will be able to stand up in his presence, not because of their own strength, but because Jesus has come and taken hold of them by his grace. When Jesus takes hold of us, he casts out our fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

17:4 don’t be afraid. The power and comfort of these words rests in the fact that Jesus is the speaker. He is the one who gave his life for our salvation. As a child’s fear is dispelled by a loving parent’s words, so our fear is dispelled by the words of Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

17:5 listen to him. Keep on hearing him. We too are directed to the voice of Christ, to Christ’s Word, which is God’s Word, and not to wonderful visions. We have enough in his Word. That is a bright light, which gives light to us in this dark world, and shows us the way of salvation. Refusing to listen to the Prophet Moses (Deut 18:15) as he speaks to us through Scripture (Jn 5:39) and those who proclaim his message (Lk 10:16), is a serious matter indeed, for it signifies that one is not a child of God (Jn 8:47) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

17:9 don’t tell anyone. What the three disciples had seen was obviously out of the ordinary. Until Jesus rose from the dead, the general public and the other disciples could not properly understand it. (TLSB)