

Sermon Notes – February 15, 2026
The Holy Gospel of St. Matthew 17: 1-9
Peace Lutheran Church
“A Vision of Glory”

Today’s readings feature mountaintop experiences of divine glory, all of which clarify divine things and change the people present.

The first reading describes Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai (see Exod. 19: 1-25; 34: 29-35). Mountaintop settings and cloud cover are typical for stories that reveal divine encounters. After six days of preparation, God invites Moses up the mountain, where he spends forty days and nights. While the time-frames may be ballpark figures, given their symbolism (yet this comes from God's divine inspired word), six days doubles an earlier timeframe (19: 11), and forty days is a recurring identifier of time in scripture (Gen. 7: 17; 1 Kings 19: 8; Jonah 3: 4, Matt. 4: 2). Though Moses alone is invited, he brings along Joshua, the one he mentors. These mentoring experiences prepare Joshua to lead after Moses dies.

The second reading describes the transfiguration from an eyewitness perspective. More important than visual bells-and-whistles is the word spoken by God (1: 17). The call to “be attentive” (v. 19) resonates with Matthew 17: 5 (“listen to him”). The “day” alludes to the “Day of the Lord” referenced in Old Testament writings, and the “morning star” alludes to the “star” of Jacob (Num. 24: 17), which was understood as a reference to the Savior (Rev. 22: 16). Both metaphors here refer to Christ's return. The closing verses offer an understanding of the inspiration of prophecy - and, by extension, scripture (2 Peter 1: 20-21).

In the first three gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke - their telling of the transfiguration gives a glimpse of Jesus' significance midway through his ministry. This event has many parallels with Moses' encounter in Exodus 24: a mountaintop location, the seventh day, an overshadowing cloud, travel companions, a divine voice, and the presence of Moses. Other aspects unique to Matthew's version also resonate with Exodus traditions: fearfulness, an invitation to fear not, and a participant's radiant face (see Exod. 34: 29-35). These parallels suggest that the significant life events of Jesus bear close resemblance to those of Moses many years earlier.

The presence of Moses and Elijah at the time of the Transfiguration shows their mutually shared purposes and a divine truth of their lives. Both Moses and Elijah were great leaders who saw God's glory, died at God's bidding (Deut 34: 1-5; Kings 2: 11), and represented the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) – as

cornerstones of Israel's scriptures. Peter's offer to build three tents atop the mountain at the time of Jesus' Transfiguration may also reference the Festival of Booths (Lev. 23: 42). Peter's motivations may have been hospitality, reverence, or a desire to prolong the experience. The fact that Matthew omits the dismissive comment quoted in the gospels of Mark and Luke ("He did not know what to say," Mark 9: 6; Luke 9: 33) suggests that Matthew thought the offer appropriate. Matthew includes the statement "With Him I am well pleased," (3:17) which is the verbatim pronouncement also made at Jesus' baptism, as recorded in Matthew 17: 5.

Today's readings invite reflection on the divine significance of Jesus, who is our mediator with and to God. Like mountaintop spiritual experiences today, the Transfiguration is more mysterious than explained. Along with Jesus' disciples, we are called not to understand everything but to worship and to "listen to Him."