

Matthew 17:1 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

4 Peter 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."

5 While 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!**"

6 When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

7 But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."

8 When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

9 As 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."

INTRO - In the 1500's a priest was in agony. This priest knew God wanted His children to be holy, and God wanted this priest to be holy and righteous. But the priest could only think of his own struggle with sin. After studying God's word for any help, he came across something that was missing in the church of his time, the teaching of God's love and grace through Jesus. God loves us, not because we are righteous, but as a gift, in Jesus. God saves us, not because we are good enough, but through God's mercy when we believe Jesus died for our sins and rose to save us. The priest's whole attitude changed. He went from being a man in agony, to being a man at peace with God because of forgiveness in Jesus, and therefore he was at peace with himself.

The priest couldn't keep the good news to himself, but ended up sharing it with others, and that caused trouble. The leader of the church, the pope, demanded the priest stop teaching differently than the church had taught. The pope threatened to kick the priest out of the church and to put a death sentence on his head if he didn't stop teaching what he had found in the Bible. What would the priest do, share God's truth with others, or protect himself?

You have probably guessed that the priest was Martin Luther. But, in this dilemma Luther's whole life now revolved around the hope of God's love in Jesus. He did not want to oppose his leader, he did not want to be thrown out of the church, and to put his life in danger. But the love of God had so changed his life, Luther could not help but share God's love with others. Because of God's love, Luther now willingly faced trials he didn't choose.

- I. That story may seem unusual, but it is similar to the situation in which Jesus found himself in our lesson.
  - A. Jesus was facing the job of dying for the sins of the world. In Matthew 16, Jesus told his disciples, **21 . . . that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.**
    1. On the cross, as he prayed, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' Jesus faced death, and hell itself for the people of the world.
    2. We know from his prayer in Gethsemane that, as a man at least, he would like to have had this job taken away.
  - B. But, it was on the Mountain of Transfiguration that Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem, and His crucifixion.
    1. The words that gave Jesus strength to face this difficult task were again, words of love from His Heavenly Father,
    2. **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"**
  - C. Think of it, compared to Luther, Jesus' task was immensely more difficult. But, the assurance of the love of the Father strengthened Jesus, and He went and knowingly faced the most difficult task ever done in this world.
- II. After Jesus' rose from the dead, coming back to life for all who believe in Him, he told his disciples, **"Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all things, whatsoever I command you.**
  - A. Going to the whole world means leaving home.
    1. Actually, baptizing and teaching meant rejection, and persecution, and death for all but one of the disciples.
    2. This was not a job they would have chosen.
  - B. But they had been with Jesus and known He was God's son.
    1. They had seen him suffer had come to understand it was FOR THEM.
    2. They had seen Him after he rose, and had come to know that He rose FOR THEM.
  - C. They knew that Jesus died for sinners like them, like Luther, like you and me, and that He rose for us, and though they probably didn't want to leave home, and be rejected, and die,
    1. They knew the love of Jesus and they could not deny their Savior who had loved them.
    2. So they went, making disciples.

II. What difficult task will you face for the Lord this week?

A. You may say, 'Pastor, I don't have to lead a Reformation, or save the world on the cross. I am not one of Jesus' 12 apostles.'

1. No, but let me read what God calls his church to do in one of the more general letters to the church.
2. Please take out your Bibles and turn to Romans 12. Let me give emphasis as we read, **Rom 12:9-21** **9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another ABOVE YOURSELVES. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but KEEP YOUR SPIRITUAL FERVOR, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, PATIENT IN AFFLICTION, FAITHFUL IN PRAYER. 13 SHARE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED. Practice hospitality. 14 BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.**
3. I'm sure there are plenty of opportunities for you in this verse, opportunities which match your life, but opportunities where serving the Lord is not easy.

A. Look at verse 12 - Is there trouble in your life, can you show God's love through **'patience in affliction?'**

B. Or, as you choose how to spend your precious time, will you be **'faithful in prayer.'**?

C. Look at verse 13, Can you **Share** what you have **with God's people who are in need**. By the way, I know someone who needs help, if you ask me after worship today.

D. Is someone persecuting you, or giving you troubles, can you, **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse**, as verse 14 calls to God's children.

E. Or verse 20, Do you have an enemy you can help, and **overcome evil with good**.

B. Before you say you can't do this, let me tell you what Jesus has done for you.

1. Romans 5:8 says, **'God shows His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'** That is what God has done for me, and you.

2. If you are baptized, God has said to you, like Jesus and because of Jesus, 'This is my child, whom I love, to whom I give my pleasure, my love by Grace.

3. Today God will say, 'I am with you, in the body and blood of Jesus. I know you are a sinner, but I come in this sacrament to forgive you, and save you, as you repent and believe.' I come to strengthen you with love.

C. Being a Christian means facing difficult challenges.

1. You don't have to save to be a pastor, or an apostle. Being patient in suffering, and loving your enemy is hard enough.

2. But do you want to turn your back on your Lord who died for you, who rose for you, who loved you the way He has?

CONCLUSION - So, What difficult task will you face for the Lord this week? Amen.

1 Pet 3:8-12 8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay **evil** with **evil** or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from **evil** and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from **evil** and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do **evil**."