

Men Whose Eyes Have Seen the King - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the Transfiguration as a turning point in the mission of the Lord Jesus, representing the perfecting of his humanity and the glorifying of his sinlessness, and highlights the need for a recovery of the church's impact on the world through a vision of the glorified Lord.

Duration: 56:38

Scripture: Matthew 17:5, Matthew 17:9-12, 2 Peter 1:16, 2 Peter 1:19

Topics: "Seeing Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the current state of the world, which is dominated by evil forces that cause destruction and harm. The church is portrayed as being unable to cope with these situations, leaving people feeling helpless. The speaker then refers to the Mount of Transfiguration as a source of inspiration and guidance. The need for men who have seen the King, referring to those who have had a spiritual encounter with God, is emphasized as a solution to the challenges faced by the world and the church. The sermon concludes by highlighting the story of a father who brings his possessed son to the disciples of Jesus, but they are unable to help. This story serves as a reminder of the importance of having a personal encounter with God in order to effectively minister to others.

Transcript

In the second letter of Peter, and chapter 1, at verse 16, For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have the word of prophecy made more sure, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, the day star, arise in your hearts. Little clause in the hymn that we have just sung, might well be the title of our meditation and occupation at this time. Men whose eyes have seen the King.

Men whose eyes have seen, as we in our hymn have prayed the Lord to send such men. Sure we all feel deeply and strongly that that is the need of our time. The world needs such, the church needs such, and as at old times when the Lord has had such, and has sent them forth, the need has been met.

His need, the need of others. So we might well pray, send men whose eyes have seen the King. I think that really sums up this whole matter of the Transfiguration.

If it worked out that way, that is why he took the three leaders from the twelve into the mountain, that presently, that vision made alive with meaning, power, by the Holy Spirit. They would go forth as men who had seen the King. And what happened? We are living today in the ever growing value of that vision.

If I bring you, dear friends, again back to the Mount of Transfiguration, in thought and meditation, believe me it is not a subject, a theme, that concerns or interests me. I have been very much before the Lord that at this time, need should be met. Situations should be touched and ministered to.

You are here, and I think I should not be wrong in saying very few of you here are unaware of the strenuousness of the times in which we live for the Lord's people. You have come from different parts of the battlefield, from the labor and the travel and the pressure. You are here, I presume, on no other ground and for no other reason than that you feel the need of renewal, of fresh strength and fresh enablement to go back to your scenes of difficulty.

That has been my quest in prayer, the Lord would meet such need here at this time. And I believe that he has led to this matter because it is here, it is here, I am sure that we can find what we need. So let us give ourselves for this little while to looking into this matter of the transfiguration.

Its very setting in both of the places to which it is referred, as we have read, is significant and is helpful. You know that three of the four gospels, as they are called, record this matter of the transfiguration, Matthew, Mark and Luke, indicating surely that with these men the matter was of some particular importance. If John did not actually record this incident, this event, I am not sure that he passed it over and got it in mind.

We may come on that as we go on. Do you know that at this time of the transfiguration, things were becoming increasingly difficult for the Lord? The growing hostility in all directions, pressing him in, weighing heavily upon both his spirit and his ministry, making his ministry more and more difficult and more and more limited. The shadow of the cross was lengthening on his path.

It is just in this connection that he speaks frankly to his disciples for the first time, frankly about the cross. The atmosphere was just charged with a sense of pending crisis. Something is going to happen.

It was at that time, in those conditions, that he took three from the twelve into the mountain apart and was transfigured before them, had a great relatedness to the situation which was and which was developing. In the case of the many years later, when Peter wrote, spoke about this matter, from his letters we know something of the situation begins by addressing himself to the saints scattered, saints scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, scattered saints. Some of you here today know what it means to be of the scattered people of the Lord in distant places, in lonely places.

And distance and loneliness creating its own problems and its own heartaches. Scattered saints as perhaps differing from the great days of being together. How things seem to ease up when we are together.

Sense of fellowship, sense of life and of joy. So much when we are all together. These saints perhaps had known something of the great togetherness of Jerusalem or elsewhere.

Now scattered with all that that means. Peter goes on to speak to them about the trial of their faith. Knowing this that the trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tried in the fire.

These scattered saints were knowing something of the fire of tried faith. There is much more in his letters indicating a not too helpful situation for the people of God. Indeed the keynote to his letters is grace.

They needed to know there was opposition, there was persecution, there were false prophets, false teachers, all that. And to that situation Peter wrote and in his writing introduced this matter of the transfiguration. It's significant.

There is something in this for the people of God in days of difficulty and adversity. Indeed what they and we all need in such times is a new vision of the King. That is what the Lord Jesus meant amongst other things for that little band of men.

The three were commanded not to say anything about it for the time being until he was risen from the dead. Someone has used his imagination. That connection, how difficult it was for these three to hold their tongue when they came down and say nothing about it, even to the others.

But then when he was risen, how gladly and eagerly they told the others and everybody of this wonderful experience. Goes to the heart of everything. If this is true, that is if the transfiguration was true, then anything and everything in the Bible can be true.

If it was not true, then we can doubt everything, but it was true. Now let us look at the significance of this matter, the significance of the transfiguration. You are aware that it was a turning point or it marked the turning point in the mission of the Lord Jesus on this earth.

He had gone to the farthest point of his travels, nor from that outermost rim of his ministrations, he would immediately turn about with face to the south and to Jerusalem and to the cross. A resolute, purposeful, meaningful decision was reached on the mount. It was a crisis, turning point.

We might say that it was the very heart of his time here on this earth. The significance of the transfiguration represents the very heart of everything, if you could see it. But what did it mean so far as he was concerned? I think it meant two things in one.

It certainly did represent and set forth the absolute perfecting of his humanity. Here he has reached the point of his own personal perfecting as a man. And this glorifying, this transfiguring was heaven's testimony to his utter and perfect sinlessness as a man.

That in all respects of hells of sorts and temptations and subtleties and devils and men's hatred, malice, trickery and what not, he had triumphed, completely triumphed in the matter of sin. If we were to analyze it too closely, take our time of course, we should have to look at that word sin. Sin.

But we can say this, that the sum of sin from the beginning in the garden to the end is unfaithfulness to God. A breach of fellowship with God through mistrust, through mistrust. That is the very core of sin.

Everything was concentrated upon him from every realm to make a breach between him and God. By some means, in some way, that would be sin. It never happened in his case.

He met it all and triumphed. Here is a man perfected where the first Adam failed and all his seed have been involved. Humanity that God intended to be is here achieved and realized and expressed and is therefore glorified.

So far as he was concerned, that was the first meaning. Sin, sin with all its horrible following entailed has been completely defeated in and by this man. And therefore death must go, there can be no death.

For death is the result of sin. If Adam had never sinned he would never have died. This one never sinned.

He could not die. He could only be glorified. There is another aspect as to its meaning to him.

It is quite clear that the Lord Jesus carried in his heart a great longing and a prayer for the glory that he once had. In John, this is where I think John touches this matter very closely. Recording that great prayer of the Lord Jesus in the 17th chapter.

Begins, and repeats, Father glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. That opens a window and lets us see that the Lord Jesus had a consciousness of his eternal glory past. Carried it with him.

Knew about it. Marvellous thought. There it is.

And that consciousness of the glory that he had before the world was. Was ever prompting him to pray or long toward the day when he would return to it and it would return to him. Father glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

The mount of transfiguration was the answer to his heart's prayer and cry and longing. Here it is. A touch of it.

Fleeting touch. But for him, it was one of those things perhaps you know little about in your Christian life. The Lord just does something.

It passes, but you know by that that you've been heard. You know by that that there is sympathy in the Father's heart for your need and situation. You know.

May only last for a day or a night, an hour or a little while and passes because the end of the road is not yet. The eternal glory has not yet come, but the touch by the way is something that carries us on. We know the Lord heard.

We know the Lord took account of that inner cry and longing and gave us a token. A token of his sympathy. Like that with the Lord Jesus.

The answer to his own cry. It was his own personal glorification and heaven's attestation of him and the perfection of his being. Now, as you notice, it is here that the Lord Jesus introduces in a direct, frank way the matter of his cross.

If there had been any hints before, the apostles and their representative Peter was completely oblivious to those hints. But now, here about, at this time, the Lord Jesus comes to the matter quite positively, quite definitely, quite deliberately. Peter rises up as the spokesman of the other in rebellion.

Won't have it. But there it is. There it is.

The transfiguration was the offset to the cross for these men when they should come to realize that the cross was not what they were thinking it would be at that time. The end of everything. Shame and failure, reproach, dishonor, despair.

When they should come to see that the cross was just the opposite of all those things, then the transfiguration would take a new place. And they would see as Peter says in his letter. He didn't read it all.

You read further in that chapter, you will hear Peter saying something like this. The prophets sought and searched diligently what manner of time the spirit which was in them did point to when it testified beforehand the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow. Peter's got it right now.

He's got it round the right way. First, in the first place, when he would repudiate the sufferings, he's all for the glory. He's putting that first.

They were after the glory and not going to have any of the sufferings. The cross was something they would not hear about or accept. Yes, glory, but not the suffering.

He's got it round the other way now. At last, the sufferings and the glory that should follow. Is that what Moses and Elijah were talking to the Lord Jesus about on the mountain? The exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem? The suffering and the glory? The transfiguration was the great offset to the suffering.

To the cross. And it was intended not only for the Lord himself. It was intended for these leaders amongst his servants.

That they should have the ground laid, foundation put down upon which presently the Holy Spirit would alight foreseeing that not only the cross of Calvary but all its outworkings were in the light of the glory. Had the glory at the end, these sufferings were toward the glory. They came to see that later.

And dear friends, you and I need that message. The message of the transfiguration is this. At this particular point.

It's not all now transfiguration. There's a lot that is of the plain and the valley. There is the cross.

You notice the Lord Jesus in speaking of the cross told them, He that saveth his life shall lose it. There's a lot of that to be gone through and experienced. But this is saying all that.

The cross, his cross and the outworking of his cross in the experience of his own servants is unto this glorious end. That they shall be glorified together with him. As to the issue of the transfiguration, what was it? And what is it? What was it intended to be? There's the significance of it.

What is the issue of it? Well, we have to look for the issue in the incident that immediately followed as they came down from the mountain. We read it. Full of, full of truth.

Too full for exhausting at this time. So they came down. This distracted father came to him and to them.

Distracted over his boy, who in the original language he calls, my only begotten son. The one boy. Many emotional elements bound up with it of course, which we can read.

But here is this father with his boy, Distracted over the situation and disappointed over the nine representatives of the Lord Jesus. The majority of his disciples, whom he had left down below. Comes with this boy, describes what happens to him.

What's the matter with him? And tells him what happens to him. What's the matter with him? And tells him that although he brought the boy to his disciples, they could not help him or do anything about it. Here surely in the Holy Spirit's thought in giving these details, is the suggestion of an impotent church.

In the presence of this demon-driven humanity on the plain. It's representative of a condition in this world and in humanity. Perhaps be too imaginative, going too far to say the description of this boy's trouble and how it affected him, can be seen in counterpart in the world today.

World is under the domination of a power with which it can. A driving force, driving toward destruction. Always driving in the direction of self-destruction.

That's the world today, can't help it. It's mastered by an evil power in this universe. Driving, dominating, frustrating every effort.

And in this scene of humanity's helplessness and need, the church doesn't know what to do with it. Unable to cope. And you can bring that situation down to ten thousand things.

We are all up against situations with which we cannot cope. You are. In your assemblies.

Perhaps in your own family. Perhaps in your own self. Forces that are too much.

Driving. And it's always in the direction of destruction, isn't it? Of evil, of harm, of hurt, of injury. Toward the fire and the water.

To destroy and to quench. That's a good description of the evil work, of the evil one in human life. We have this small representation of it in this boy.

And without indulging in unworthy criticism, and taking account, full account, of all the noble sacrifice, and service, and labor, toil, of the servants of the Lord, we have nevertheless to say that in a very large degree, and in a great many things, the Lord's people are impotent in the presence of these things. They're holding the ground. They're defeating and defying every effort.

It's quite patent that these nine had made an effort. Why could not we cast it out? They evidently tried. Failed.

It was effort and labor for naught. And the enemy laughing at them. Holding his ground.

And no doubt the critical world around being very pleased that these disciples were such poor expressions of their Lord. Letting him down. That's what they wanted the disciples to do.

To let him down. To betray him. Well, it's not pleasant thought, is it? But there it is.

Now, what is the issue of the Transfiguration? Surely, dear friends, it is this. That there must be an impact of the exalted and glorified Christ brought upon these situations. It's a question of impact.

Impact. When I've used that word, I'm quite sure that many of you say, Yes, that's what we need. That's what I need in my life.

That's what the church needs. That's what a local company needs. An impact upon things.

Upon situations. Upon places. You see, this is what happened later, isn't it? It did.

These men whose eyes had seen the King. These men who had come to understand the meaning of the Transfiguration. Jesus.

Perfected. Glorified. Exalted.

Attested by Heaven. Men who had seen Him thus. Went everywhere.

And what an impact. Rarely, if ever, they failed to register on this earth. In the Kingdom of Satan.

It was impact. Do you notice how Peter describes this? We were eyewitnesses of His Majesty. His Majesty.

Isn't the impact of the Majesty of the Lord Jesus upon this earth? I'm sure it is. But then He said, When we made known unto you the power and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sorry they hadn't translated that word.

Thus, they put coming. Well, of course, the word is related to the coming again of the Lord Jesus very frequently. But the word itself cannot be isolated to that.

It's used of the Apostles. The same word. They came into a situation.

Same word. The coming. The presence.

The presence. Peter describes this as the power and presence of His Majesty. Yes, that's the issue.

The power. Not as abstract and unrelated. But the power of His presence.

In His Majesty. That's the Holy Mount. That's the High Place.

That is what the world needed. Let me use the word again. Impact.

Dear friends, if it should be ours to see the King in His glory. If it should be ours to catch a fresh glimpse of the glorified Lord. That's going to answer the cry and need for impact.

And I put it the other way. There will never be an impact until we have seen Him as the glorified Lord. He is the answer to every need.

And a vision of Him as exalted and attested by Heaven. Will bring new impact into our lives. Into our ministries.

Into our churches. Upon situation. Does not your heart cry as mine does.

Oh, for a recovery of the church's impact upon this world. Which is none other than the impact of the Majesty. Of the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Now, we know that that is how it will be. When this word as it is does actually connect with His appearance. At the end.

When He comes. He will smite the earth with the sword of His mouth. But the brightness of His presence will be devastating to evil.

There's no doubt about it that when that presence, that parousia takes place. There will be an impact. We cry for that.

We pray for that. But, you see, the word is used not only of that. But of different occasions and different connections.

The same word, exactly the same word as used for the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Is used of apostles coming into a situation. Being present there.

And it is used of the Lord Jesus in this progressive way. He came in that sense on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was His presencing in glory.

Again and again He presenced Himself. And every time there was impact. All pointing to the final great presencing of the Lord.

It's interesting, isn't it? Peter speaks of the Mount of Transfiguration in exactly the same word as he speaks of the coming again of the Lord. At the end. The presencing of the Lord.

We do need an anticipation of the day of His coming in the church now. We need something of the meaning of that final impact. Now.

His presence in majesty and in power. Well, these are statements with which I imagine all of you agree. Both as to the significance.

And as to the issue. And as to the need. Now.

What about it? We agree. We agree. One of the writers of this event tells us that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray.

To pray. And as He prayed. The passion of His countenance was deep.

And when He came down. The key which He used to that desperate situation was the key of prayer. This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.

What are we to pray for? What is to be the burden of our prayer? In relation to this matter of impact. Recovered power. Dear friends.

If you have any sense of this poor world's distracted condition. And desperate need. You won't control your praying.

You will not regulate your praying. You will not make prayer a legal system. Of your must.

Your must. Your touch. As the Lord was touched with this situation and this need.

Be it in an individual. Or be it in a company. Or be it in the world.

Or the whole church. The only thing that you will do but you will do it. Is pray.

And what will you pray for? What is it that will answer the need? The situation. Will touch it. Now here you see is a point of departure.

With this I close for the moment. We see the need. We are aware of the situation.

Here and there. This one and that. This place and that.

And of course we do pray to the Lord and ask him to do something about it. We do that. I trust I am not saying a wrong thing when I say.

That too often it is like the effort of the mind. Nothing happens. Nothing happens.

The thing goes on. Persists. And defies you.

See the need is not for that kind of prayer. It is for the kind of prayer that brings in the majesty and the power of Jesus Christ. Is born out of a mighty apprehension of his glory.

Of who he is. What he has done. Where he is.

And what he is doing now. That is what we need to recover. About that we have much more to say.

But the church needs and you and I need. Let us recognize it. Face it.

Acknowledge it. What is needed is this. To have the secret of bringing in the majesty of the Lord into us.

Putting that power upon it. It is executive. It is dynamic.

It is something which registers and the thing is done. Don't you agree with me that is what we need? That secret? And for that I repeat what we need is a new mighty mastery in our inner being of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. We all agree he is great.

We will sing how great thou art. We won't reserve or trim our words about the Lord Jesus in glory. But there is a gap.

A gap between that and this situation. That is the tragedy and that is the problem and the perplexity of it. He is like that and yet this is like this.

The two things are not brought together. They are not brought together. Why did he take those three up? Not simply and only because he had a heart that longed for human fellowship.

No, he knew who they were. He knew their future. He knew the position that Peter was going to take and he knew the ministry that John was going to fulfill right on beyond the lifetime of all the others.

And he took them there with him. With this one object I believe in view that in those coming days when they would meet these situations in this world they would be in possession of the secret of his majesty and be a link, a link between him in glory and this situation of shame and evil. Is not that the function of the church? Is not that the vocation of the church? To be his link between heaven and earth.

To be the instrument of the registration of his kingdom upon the kingdom of Satan. Is not that what we are called for? If that is not it I don't know what we are for. And if we fail at that we can do ten thousand things and still the enemy will laugh at us.

With all our effort and expenditure he still holds the ground so terribly. Oh for men whose eyes have seen the king. Because to have done so means a tremendous thing in the life of such men.

That we shall see. But here is the preparation of the way. And dear friends before we begin to pray over situations let us pray for a new vision of the majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus and then nothing will be impossible.

I believe that that is the point in the thought of the Lord when he said if you have faith a grain of mustard seed. See it is not merely psychological make-believe. If only you have grasped the smallest meaning of his majesty anything is possible.

It is so great. It is so great.

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