

Matt 17 – A glory that moves us.

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Main Point – Jesus is the glorious divine King who we need to listen to and trust

I think something that amazes us all is a stunning **sunset(SLIDE)**.

To see the deep and bright yellows & oranges; pinks & purples, is just awe-inspiring. Doesn't a beautiful sunset blow you away?-----

Blow you away with God's creative power; his majesty, his glory?-----

Amazing sunsets reveal God's glory; but they cannot save us.

Or help us know God personally.-----

What we really need is to encounter the glory of Jesus.-----

And today we'll see his glory, which should move us.-----

Last week in **Matt 16**, we saw Jesus is the King who denied himself.(**SLIDE**)

Peter was right when he said, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And once the disciples understood that Jesus was the promised King & Saviour, he went on to tell them why he came, and how he'd save.-----

He needed to suffer; die and rise.-----

Then in the last verse of ch16 Jesus promised that some of them will not die before they see Jesus come in his kingdom.-----

Some would get a snapshot of his glorious kingdom very soon.-----

And in the very next verse we're told it is, '6 days later'.-----

Specific time mentions are not common in Matthew's Gospel.

But it links sacrifice n' suffering, with glory.-----

Jesus has just promised his death is coming, and if there's any doubt for Peter that this is God's plan, he's now given assurance.-----

'After six days Jesus took Peter, James and his brother John, (his 3 closest disciples) and led them up a high mountain by themselves.'

Which mountain it was, we're not sure.

In 16v13 Jesus was near Caesarea Philippi, and now 6 days later up a mountain.

So it was probably Mt Hermon;----- **in red circle; and pictured here.**-----

There the 3 disciples see Jesus' glory.

My first point is, Glory – seen.-----(**SLIDE**)There, **v2**, Jesus was '**transfigured** in front of them'.-----

Transfigured is an obscure word, but because we don't really understand what happened to Jesus, obscurity fits the situation.

The word in Greek is 'metamorpho', from which we get metamorphosis.

It's a word that describes being transformed or changed in appearance.-----

My wife **Kirsti** teaches Science at Primary School, and something her kids are looking at this term is the life cycle of Monarch Butterflies.(**SLIDE**)

The children get to see, caterpillars grow big, then form a chrysalis, before emerging as beautiful Monarch butterflies.

The change is phenomenal.

We could say the caterpillars are transformed and transfigured.-----

And Jesus' appearance also drastically changes. Look at v2.

His face shines like the sun; (**SLIDE**) and his clothes as white as light.-----

Jesus didn't just reflect brightness n' glory, like the moon does; Jesus radiated glory from within.-----

This is Jesus revealing his true nature & character.-----

Normally on earth his divine nature was veiled n' hidden.

People couldn't see who Jesus really was – God the Son, God in human flesh.

He had laid aside his glory to come to earth.

But the one who is fully man here reveals he is also fully God.-----

And Peter James n' John get a taste of it here.-----

As we sing in Hark the Herald angels sing, 'veiled in flesh the Godhead see'.-----

Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus.-----

And we're being told that Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah; greater than the law and the prophets.-----

There's parallels with Moses, but Jesus is greater.-----

In **Exodus 24** the glory of the Lord settled on Mt Sinai(**SLIDE,v16**), and a cloud covered it for 6 days, and on the 7th Moses was called up.

Now 'after 6 days' Jesus went up a mountain.-----

The Israelites in Ex 24 saw the Lord's glory, and Moses entered the glory cloud.-----

Here, Jesus' disciples witness the shining light of his glory.-----

In **Ex 34** after being in God's presence Moses' face was radiant, with reflected glory.

Yet Paul in **2Cor 3** says Moses' glory faded. [v13]

But Jesus is different.-----

Daniel ch7 describes God, the **Ancient of Days** having clothing white as snow, hair, white like wool, and a throne with flaming fire.

Then one 'like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven, approached the Ancient of Days.

Dan 7v14 says,(**SLIDE**) 'He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion.'-----

Then fast forward to the end of the Bible, **Rev ch1**.

Here we learn that Jesus' temporary transformation in Matthew 17 gives the disciples a foretaste of his future glory.-----

The apostle John sees in his vision,(**SLIDE**)

Someone 'like the Son of Man... ¹⁴The hair of his head was white as wool—white as snow—and his eyes like a fiery flame... his face was shining like the sun at full strength.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last, ¹⁸and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.'-----

Jesus is the glorious, shining, awesome Son of Man of Dan 7 & Rev 1.-----

He is the Glorious living God and King.-----

That's why Peter testified in **2 Peter 1(SLIDE)**

We didn't share an invented story 'when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, 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 beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased!" ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain.'-----

Peter really saw Christ's majestic glory, and heard God's voice.-----

17v4, similar to at his baptism, "**This is my beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased.--- Listen to him!"-----

Jesus is God-the-Father's loved SON.

He stands apart from Moses n' Elijah, from his disciples, and from us.-----

Yes, we by faith become adopted sons n' daughters of God.

But Jesus is Son of God in his nature.-----

When you think about Jesus, do you ever think about Him like that?-----

Wouldn't it be good for us to sit back and reflect on the glory of Jesus?-----

God asked the disciples to listen to Jesus.-----

God calls for a response of, **listening**.

God was saying in effect,

‘If my Son tells you he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die, believe him.

If he tells you he will be raised up on the third day, believe him.

If he tells you to take up your own cross and follow him, that is what you are to do.

If he says He will come again in glory, then believe him, and live accordingly.’-----

And in Matt 17 God is speaking to you and I, and calls us to listen to Jesus.-----

If you do that, what will change for you?-----

Just a few verses earlier, in ch16, Jesus said we must deny ourself and follow him.

We touched on that last week, but there’s so much more that could be said.

Maybe denying yourself means:

- You ask, How should I be serving my church family, even when it’s costly?-----
- Or you don’t vent your anger in aggressive words, or seething bitterness.
- Or you don’t give into that desire to look lustfully at another man or woman
- As a husband you stop controlling, and love your wife for her good.

In Matt Papa’s book, ‘Look and Live: (SLIDE; which I’ve recommended before) Beholding the soul-satisfying, sin-destroying glory of Christ’, he shares that he was addicted to sin.

And no matter what he did, how hard he tried, he just couldn’t change, he couldn’t obey Christ.

Then a mentor friend said:

“Matt, I know you’ve been fighting, but have you been looking?”-----

What he meant was had I really been spending time with Jesus?-----

In the hustle and bustle of life I hadn’t. And so I did, I really did.

I began just soaking in the Bible every morning. I woke up and just looked at Jesus. And it didn’t happen overnight, but slowly, something began happening.

I started tasting freedom. I began changing. I met Glory.-----

Matt says, That’s how we change. We experience a greater Thrill.-----

Sadly much Christian teaching today tells us to change, by either calling us to do better, and try harder.

The other approach is, “Just believe in yourself, you can do it.”-----

Whatever sin we’re tempted by, the key is to turn our focus to Jesus.-----

Merely knowing what is true will not change us, because we are not creatures driven by knowledge, but by desire...

We will resist temptation and change when we change what we put in front of our face.----

In prayer we need to behold the Son of God, not merely look at Him.

We need to gaze deep into the Gospel, not merely pray some prayer then move on.

We must take time;---- make time.----- We must linger.-----

Will you linger; in looking at Christ; and listening to him?-----

Next we see Glory - veiled.(SLIDE) And my next 2 points are shorter.-----

Having just witnessed Jesus’ glory and heard God’s command to Listen to him, what does Jesus say next?

v7, "Get up, Don't be afraid."

While Jesus deserves to have people fall in fear before his holy presence, he calls them to get up and fear not.-----

Then he commands them to keep what they’ve seen a secret for now.

For only after he’s risen, will they properly understand who he is.-----

But 3 times in our passage Jesus speaks of his death – **v9, v12, v23**.-----

The disciples wouldn’t think the Messiah n’ SoG dying on a cross is glorious, but more like a defeat, in weakness and failure.-----

Yet the opposite is true.-----

The disciples ask about **Elijah** coming first in **v10**.

It seems they forgot back in **ch11** [v14] Jesus had said John the Baptist was that second Elijah who would come.-----

You see, because of **Malachi ch4**, (**SLIDE**) they thought Elijah would come, and then the Messiah would bring the dreadful day-of-the-Lord judgement on the world.-----

John is the forerunner of the Messiah-Jesus who will bring that judgement.-----

But what they didn't understand is that Jesus would come twice.

At his first coming, God's judgement will fall on Christ to save sinners.

Then at his second coming, he'll return in glory and bring the day-of-the-Lord judgement on the world.-----

When glory will be evident to all.-----

So at his first coming, on the cross, the day of the Lord judgement, falls on Christ, so we can be saved from it.-----

And that is good news, and glorious.-----

But most people don't see it.-----

In **1 Cor**, Paul is writing to people who were tempted to think the cross is weak and foolish, not glorious, and he says in ch1. (**SLIDE**)

'the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved...

²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. ²⁴Yet... Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength'.-----

So Jesus' glory was veiled in the cross.

God's wisdom and strength were displayed in the cross, but unbelievers are blind to it.

Jesus' glory is displayed in the cross, but unbelievers are blind to it.-----

Blind to the love and grace, the strength and faith in his Father, Jesus shows.-----.

There he takes our place, and dies our death, for our salvation.

Believe it!-----

And he deserves never-ending glory for that, doesn't he?-----

That the glorious eternal SoG would go through that for us, isn't it humbling? -----

Doesn't it blow you away?

Doesn't it move you to want to give him the glory?-----

Doesn't it move and fill your heart with wonder, love and praise, so you want to give him the glory he deserves?-----

You want to listen to and live for him.-----

Final point is Glory – in power.(SLIDE)

The high spiritual experience on the mountain is followed by a crushing anti-climax.

We move from the mountain of glory to the valley of despair.-----

When they reached the crowd, a man approached and knelt down before [Jesus].

¹⁵ "Lord," he said, "have mercy on my son, because he has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

Mark ch9 explains that the demon in this boy threw him into the fire and water.----

And it's not that all seizures are caused by demons, but these ones are.-----

Centuries earlier, Moses came down a mountain and was met with unbelief, and people worshipping the golden calf.

[Ex32]

Now Jesus comes down a mountain, and meets unbelief:

"You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon,^(a) and it^(b) came out of him, and from that moment^(c) the boy was healed.----

Jesus speaks of the whole Jewish generation, when he says they lacked faith and were spiritually twisted.-----

And Jesus later explains in **v20** they couldn't drive the demon out, because of their lack of faith.-----

Mark ch9 says they needed to pray, but the point is similar.-----

The boy's father says of the disciples, 'they couldn't heal him'.

And the disciples say, 'we couldn't'.

It seems they thought they could solve the problem themselves n' in their own power.-----

But no, their faith needed to be in Jesus, and his power to heal and save.-----

It was faith that caused young **Caleb** to look at the Promised land with its giants, and say to Moses, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." (**Num 13.30**)

Job lost all his property, all his children, and had his whole body covered with painful sores. And it was faith in God's care that enabled Job to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (**Job 13.15**).-----

It was faith in God's protection that enabled **Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego** to stand at the edge of a fiery furnace and announce to Nebuchadnezzar:

"The God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.

¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (**Dan 3.16**)

It was by faith that a **Canaanite woman** came to Jesus asking for scraps from the Master's table, knowing Jesus could heal her demon-possessed daughter.-----

It is only by faith that **any of us** are saved from the fires of hell waiting for humanity.

By faith in Christ the mountain of our sin is rolled away, and thrown into the depths of the sea.-----

By faith we find peace with the glorious God of the universe.-----

The littleness of the disciples' faith was like their little faith in the Storm on the sea.

Like Peter's faith which failed as he sank in the sea.-----

It's easy to have faith when everything's going well and under control, or when God has already provided.

And when things continue to be hard, uncertain or threatening, their faith withered.---

So often as does ours.-----

When Jesus first sent the disciples out in **ch10**, he gave the disciples authority to cast out demons and to heal all sickness.

And Mark 6 tells us they drove out many demons.

But it seems the 12 had to learn that the power was not in them.

It was in Christ, and came from Christ.-----

He's the one who casts out the demon and heals the boy.

Jesus here reveals his glory in his power.-----

And it's his power we need to trust in.-----

A **mustard seed** was one of the smallest known seeds.

So it's not so much the amount of faith that matters, but where it is located; who your faith is in.-----

It never gives up believing in the power of Christ – to sustain us, or change lives and circumstances.-----

Jesus speaks in **v20** of this tiny **faith that can move mountains**.

That's not something Jesus or the apostles literally did, nor has any believer since that I am aware of.

It was a proverbial saying among the Jews at the time, for accomplishing very great difficulties.

So it's a figure of speech, a metaphor.-----

As one writer says, Jesus means that God can remove all the difficulties that block your path, or enable you to get through them.-----

God is powerful to do impossible things.

We're to place our faith in the Jesus who can.-----

Jesus is not promising, If you just believe something enough you'll get it.

As some people claim.-----

As **John Calvin** said, **(SLIDE)** '[Jesus] does not mean that God will give us whatever comes heedlessly into our minds or mouths. In fact, since there is nothing more contradictory to faith than the foolish and unconsidered wishes of our flesh, it follows that where faith reigns there is no asking for anything indiscriminately.'-----

We might say, some people misunderstand the will of God and try to move a mountain God doesn't want moved.-----

Jesus is saying infinite resources are available to the believer, and trusting in the Lord can result in great things.-----

I don't know what seemingly impossible thing you're praying for at the moment?

But maybe it's for the family or friends you care about to be come to Christ.-----

George Muller(SLIDE) in the 1800's founded schools and orphanages and was passionate about sharing the Gospel.

At one point he began to pray for the salvation of 5 friends.

He had to wait 5 years for one to be saved.

After 5 more years two more became Christians, and then after 25 years the 4th was saved.

He prayed for his 5th friend until he died.

That man came to Christ a few months after Muller's death.

He had prayed for more than 50 years.-----

Faith perseveres in prayer.-----

We will find the strength to keep trusting God when we're captivated by the glory of Jesus.---

Christianity is the hard, joyful journey of beholding Jesus by faith.-----

And when we're captured by his glory, we'll be moved to listen to him truly, and trust him deeply.-----

Let's pray we will.