

Glorious Christ
Matthew 17:1-13
July 8th, 2018

Intro –

Doug Nichols with Action International Ministries tells a story from his early days in the 1960's working in missions. (recounted by Tim Challies)

In the summer of 1966, that Doug was working for Operation Mobilization and was stationed in London during their big annual conference. He was assigned to the clean-up crew. One night at around 12:30 AM he was sweeping the steps at the conference center when an older gentleman approached him and asked if this was where the conference was being held. Doug said that it was, but that just about everyone had already gone to bed. This man was dressed very simply and had just a small bag with him. He said that he was attending the conference. Doug replied he would try to find him a place to sleep and led him to a room where about 50 people were bunked down on the floor. The older gentleman had nothing to sleep on, so Doug laid down some padding and a blanket and offered a towel for a pillow. The man said that would be just fine and that he appreciated it very much.

Doug asked the man if he had been able to eat dinner. It turns out that he hadn't eaten since he had been travelling all day. Doug took him to the dining room but it was locked. He soon jimmied the lock and found some cornflakes and milk and bread and jam. As the man ate, the two began to talk. The man said that he and his wife had been working in Switzerland for several years, where he had a small ministry that served hippies and travelers. He spoke about his work and spoke about some of the people he had seen turn to Christ. When he finished eating, both men turned in for the night.

Doug woke up the next morning only to find out that he was in big trouble. The conference leaders came to him and said, "Don't you know who it was that you put on the floor last night? That's Francis Schaeffer! He's the speaker for this conference! We had a whole room set aside for him!"

Doug had no idea that he was sleeping on the floor next to a celebrity, that he had told a man to sleep on the floor who had a profoundly important ministry. He had no idea that this man had helped shape the Christian church of that day, and really, the church of our day. And Schaeffer never let on. In humility he had accepted his lot and been grateful for it.

The story is used to illustrate Schaeffer's humility.

But you can guess that had Doug known who he was talking to, he would have responded differently.

If the man that night had started to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the church in the west, Doug may have listened politely. But if he knew it was Schaeffer, he would have taken out a pen and notebook!

In this passage, God will help the disciples understand who they are talking to and give them a simple command in response.

1. The glory of Jesus (17:1-2)

a. The setting

- i. 6 days after the great confession and the great misstatement by Peter
 1. Luke says “about 8 days,” Matthew is more precise
 2. Peter did not understand the path the Messiah must take – suffering, death, resurrection. The Father is saying – “listen to Him! He isn’t going to suffer because I am displeased but rather because this is the plan.”
- ii. Only 3 of the 12 disciples were taken
 1. OT law required the testimony of 2-3 witnesses for the testimony to be valid (Deut. 17:6) so perhaps they were there as eye witnesses.
 2. Peter, James, and John were an inner circle within the inner circle of the disciples. The next time Matthew mentions the 3 in connection with Jesus is on another mountain, Gethsemane where he takes them with him as He pulls aside to pray before his trial, suffering, and death.
- iii. They went on a high mountain, but not told which mountain. The more important part seems to be that they be by themselves.
 1. People often meet the Lord on mountains. The Lord met Moses, in a burning bush, on Mount Sinai (ex 3-4)
 2. Later, after Israel escaped from Egypt, they met the Lord on that same mountain (ex 19). The people trembled in fear, but God showed his grace and made a covenant to be their God.
 3. Mt Carmel, Elijah and the prophets of Baal held a contest (1 Kings 18)
 4. They were often places of isolation.

b. Transfigured

- i. Literally – metamorphosis – like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly
- ii. Emphasis is on the brightness – His face shone, His clothes shone
 1. **Mark 9:3** and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.
 2. Why?
 - a. Same emphasis on the cloud from which the Father speaks in v. 5 – it was a cloud but it was bright so it brought radiance rather than darkness
- iii. They saw His glory that He had before the incarnation
 1. **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 2. **John 17:5** "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.
- iv. In Revelation, John saw Jesus as He now is:
 1. **Revelation 1:14-15** His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

2. The appearance of ***Moses*** and ***Elijah*** (17:3-4)

- a. As if the transfiguration wasn't surprising enough, what was 4 of them on the mountain now became 6.
 - b. They appeared and talked with Jesus. Luke says they spoke about His upcoming death ("departure")
 - i. **Luke 9:31** who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.
 - ii. Which also helps tie this passage in to the end of chapter 16 with the prediction of His own suffering
 - c. Why Moses and Elijah?
 - i. The OT teaching is often summarized as the "law and the prophets" – Moses and Elijah are standing in for the whole of OT teaching
 - ii. It's a visual of 5:17, where Jesus said "do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill them."
 - d. Peter again speaks while the others are silent or at least not recorded
 - i. Lord (good way to start), it is good for us to be here (safe), if you wish (deferring to Jesus) . . . so far so good!
 - ii. Make three tabernacles (tents, temporary dwellings, huts) –
 - e. Matthew leaves his statement without comment, Mark and Luke both indicate that he didn't know what to say!
 - i. **Mark 9:6** For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.
 - ii. **Luke 9:33** And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah "-- not realizing what he was saying.
 - iii. Doriani – Peter is awestruck, reverent, enthusiastic, and confused.
 - 1. Don't be too hard on Peter. Some things are hard to grasp. When a teenaged boy breathes to his sweetheart, "I love you," he may really mean, "I feel all tingly when I'm near you." More seasoned adults may shake their heads and say, perhaps rightly, "Son, you don't know what love is." He may be in error but it's a well-meaning error.
 - iv. Peter errors in a couple ways
 - 1. Seems to flatten the differences between Jesus and the prophets
 - 2. Fails to recognize this is a short event and that the journey will still lead to the cross.
3. The voice of the ***Father*** (17:5-8)
- a. While he was still speaking – in other words, the voice interrupts Peter's babbling
 - b. The Lord often manifested His presence through a cloud
 - i. Protected them from danger
 - 1. **Exod. 14:19-20** The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. 20 So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and

there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

ii. Spoke to Moses in a cloud

1. **Exod. 33:9-11** Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. 11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

iii. The Lord filled the tabernacle, where Israel found mercy

1. **Exod. 40:34-35** Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

c. Behold – Matthew’s way of saying, “pay attention! This is significant!”

i. Three things the voice communicated

1. This is my beloved Son
 - a. identity
2. I am well pleased with Him
 - a. affirmation
3. The imperative: Listen to Him!
 - a. Resulting command

ii. Perhaps this is to counteract any idea of “karma” that would lead to assumptions about His moral position or favor in the eyes of the Father

1. Remember, Peter has just expressed great shock and disagreement over the idea of a suffering Messiah, perhaps thinking it unworthy of the Messiah to suffer.

iii. What should the disciples “listen to Him!” about?

1. Most immediate context: the necessity of His suffering
2. Broader context: everything He says
 - a. Everything from blessed are the merciful to “what God has joined together let no man separate.”
 - b. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
 - i. “but that seems so narrow!” . . . “Listen to Him!”
 - c. Leon Morris – His credentials are unrivaled; mortal people should take heed to all that He says.
 - d. Michael Wilkins: “Our view of this world will be transformed when we place Jesus, the Son of God, at the center of our reality. Not only ideologies, but also our daily priorities and values must be evaluated in the light of Jesus’ revelation.

After all, the Father declares, “Listen to him!” We must listen to his guidance on the way that we live our lives—how much television and what kind of movies we watch, the way we budget our income, the respect we display toward our spouses and children, the kind of car we drive, the style of clothes we wear, the language that proceeds from our mouths. Everything that we are is impacted by the centrality of Jesus in the way that we view the world and live in it as his disciples.”

- d. The response of the disciples is common when in the presence of God – fear.
 - i. I love Jesus’ response to them though.
 - ii. He touched them – why is this detail included?
 - 1. Perhaps because they just saw Him glowing bright in this supernatural display of His identity and power, and yet He is still the man they have followed for these 2-3 years.
 - 2. One man has said they were on “the frontier of the supernatural” so this touch would have been reassuring.
 - iii. He encouraged them to get up and not be afraid, indicating perhaps that their fear was not a display of reverential awe but simple terror.
- e. When they looking up, only Jesus remained.
 - i. Moses and Elijah had done their job.
 - ii. God communicated His concise, weighty message.

4. The forerunner of the Messiah (17:9-13)

- a. Tell the vision to no one till after the resurrection
 - i. The crowd may think that time for the kingdom was right then and try to rise up in military liberation.
 - ii. After the cross and resurrection it will be clear that the immediate purpose of the Messiah was to be a substitute for sinners to purchase their forgiveness. The resurrection would show “paid in full.”
 - iii. After the cross, these 3 witnesses will be able to speak freely about their experience.
- b. Why do they ask this question about Elijah coming first?
 - i. Mark’s account shows they were discussing what rising from the dead meant
 - 1. **Mark 9:10** They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.
 - ii. Elijah was expected to restore all things – to bring about a state of justice and true worship. If that were so, how could it be that messiah would be killed in such restored environment?
- c. “Elijah” came, speaking of John the Baptist as v 13 makes clear.
 - i. How was he treated? Rejected and killed
 - ii. And that’s the way it will be with Jesus.
 - iii. The restoration of all things will come, but first there will be a cross, and then the gospel will go out to the nations, and one Jesus will return again in glory and make everything right.

5. Applying truth

- a. Listen to Him.
 - i. That is an enduring command.
 - ii. Not something that God is brow-beating us with, “You better listen to Him if you know what’s good for you!”
 - iii. It is evidence based – in His kindness, God provided clear evidence for the identity of Jesus and displayed it to these 3 disciples. He could have just said “listen to Him” without providing the reason to listen.
 - iv. Years later Peter would write about this event in the letter known as 2nd Peter.
 1. **2 Pet. 1:16-18** For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
 - a. Peter describes himself as an eyewitness
 2. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—
 - a. He describes his power and coming
 3. ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
 - a. Time when he received honor and glory
 - v. The whole book of Matthew is about His identity. “Listen to Him!”
- b. Colossians 1:19-20 summarizes the message of our passage.
 - i. **Colossians 1:19-20** For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
 1. Fullness of God was pleased to dwell – this is my beloved son
 2. Reconcile all things, having made peace – The Son of man will certainly suffer



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