

It Is Good to Be Here!

☆ Seeing Jesus' glory (vv.28-33)

☆ Sharing Jesus' glory (vv.33-36)

May the shining brilliance Jesus our Savior always light up your life:

Have you ever climbed to the top of a mountain and looked out over the landscape for miles and miles? When we were teenagers my brother Chris and I climbed the third highest mountain in Oregon, the South Sister. It's an extremely difficult climb, but at 10,358' you can see almost half the state. About twelve miles round trip, you gain almost 5000 feet to get to the summit. The worst is the "dreaded red ridge" where it feels like you slide back down as much as you step up. As the altitude increased, our friend a youth pastor was really hurting. But we made all the way up together, hiked around the beautiful blue volcano crater and tiny glacier, to the heavy bronze cover with huge wing nuts holding the notebook everyone signs. For all that work though, we had to get down in a hurry. Travel info. warns about sudden blizzards up there. We had the opposite problem. Late afternoon storms with lightning. Not much fun to be on an open area so high up in the clouds if everything starts flashing all around you.

Bright flash like lightning? At least one climber in our Bible story did not want to leave. Why did Peter say, **It Is Good to Be Here!** Better yet, can we say that with him – here in this place?

☆ Seeing Jesus' glory (vv.28-33)

For some folks going to church is harder than climbing a mountain. But for some it feels as scary. "What will it be like? What will people think of me? Will I see God in church?" Seems to me there are tons of people who would rather climb the tallest mountain than venture inside the doors of church. And yet, all who see what Peter was seeing agree: **It Is Good to Be Here!**

Rewind the video and you realize why Peter would follow Jesus anywhere. Jesus had stilled storms on the Sea of Galilee by His command. Peter saw Jesus drive out demons from possessed people really hurting. Nothing could get past the power of His voice – not a dead girl or a sick woman whom He healed, then raised the dead girl back to life. All this would sound like myth and legend, but Luke was a highly educated medical doctor. Luke checked the stories from eye witnesses "*so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*" (1:4 NIV84) Peter himself would later write: "*We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*" (2 Peter 1:16 NIV84)

Peter was the lead disciple of Jesus' chosen Twelve. He was convinced that Jesus was the long promised "*Christ of God.*" (9:20) This was true because Jesus is God from all eternity. Since creation the angels have praised Jesus' shining **glory** in heaven. But He gave up the full use of His **glory** and hid it for a time to suffer and die for all. But where is the glory in this? "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.*" (9:23-27)

About a week later on that mountain Peter, John and James saw Jesus' clothes "*as bright as a flash of lightning.*" His face changed to shine like the sun. (Matthew 17:2) Only four men came up the mountain, but now two others were with Jesus. Both had known their own departure (Greek *exodus*).

Moses was the greatest prophet who led God's people out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Elijah stood strong against false prophets and finally went to heaven in a whirlwind fiery chariot. Peter must have liked their talk about Jesus fulfilling His mission as the Messiah. But like so many of us in the presence of God's holiness, their eyes became very sleepy. ***"But when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leavening Jesus,"*** Peter wanted to keep that awesome vision alive. Not knowing what to say, he blurted out, ***"Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."***

Have you ever wished vacation could go on forever? Ever feel like **It's Good to Be Here!** but I don't want to grow up. I don't want to go home. I don't ever want to leave this place. Peter was **Seeing Jesus' glory** and longed for heaven on earth. The veil was off. **Seeing Jesus' glory**, he could see God!

✧ **Sharing Jesus' glory (vv.33-36)**

Peter was not totally wrong. God had given Moses instruction about a national camping trip, much like a Fall harvest festival, where everyone had to stop work and live in shelters they put up. Imagine that! God mandated a vacation for everyone, even slaves, the poor, the animals. The Festival of Tents / Tabernacles was to illustrate the full harvest home with God in heaven – a vacation that never ends. Peter felt **It's Good to Be Here!** Let's stay!

Peter was not totally wrong, but his timing was off. In Old Testament times when God wanted to show His presence, He came in a bright cloud called the *Shekinah*. There on the Mount of Transfiguration God wrapped Peter, John and James in a cloud. With sight gone, their ears opened.

A voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." We're not supposed to blurt out our own opinions as if God should take orders from us, as if everyone should accept our interpretation, as if we have the last word. Jesus is the Last Word from God, the Word of God Incarnate, in human flesh and blood. With Peter we see Jesus shining on the mountain as God's own Son. When we listen to Him, we are **Seeing Jesus' glory**.

And Jesus is calling us to come down that mountain and follow Him to another. On Mount Calvary Christ's blood will flow and tears will run like rivers from His mother Mary and disciple John who witnessed the awful sacrifice of God's own Son. We need to follow Jesus through these forty days of Lent, starting this week on Ash Wednesday, all the way to the cross on which the Prince of Glory died. We will see God's glory there like no where else, His glory to love us when we are so crabby, selfish, sad and miserable sometimes that we can hardly stand ourselves. And for those times when we love ourselves too much and God too little, there will be hard lessons how sinful we really are. It took God's Son to die for us to save our souls from eternal torment in hell. Jesus for us – that's His **glory** the way God sees it. Jesus knew what lies down the mountain. He gives us this day to trust and follow Him.

Dear friends, we may not be mountain climbers. You may tremble as I do when it comes time to speak up. But everyone you know needs to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. When He comes again, God wants them to rejoice and celebrate with all their heart in heaven: **It Is Good to Be Here!** As one of my sainted professors put it: *"The redeemed at that time will no longer walk by faith, but by sight. They will have clear, tangible, visible evidence that God is dwelling with them, just as Israel had such evidence of God's nearness in the tabernacle [tent]....This promise was to assure them that God was still controlling the course of history in order that someday they would see the truth of what they now could only believe."*¹ ***"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*** (Revelation 21:3 NIV84)

Thank God for Jesus' **glory** to save us. The heights of heaven we will never have to leave. Amen.

¹ Becker, Siegbert W. *REVELATION The Distant Triumph Song*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1985, p. 329.

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