

THE TRANSFIGURATION – 2026

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Scripture: Matthew 17: 1-8

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“17 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” 8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.”

Matthew starts interestingly. He says, “After six days,” or “six days later,” and we must then ask the question: What happened six days prior? Six days ago, something shifted very drastically with the way that Jesus was talking. In Matthew 16, Peter had confessed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And immediately after that confession, Jesus began to speak about suffering and rejection and death.

The disciples had no category apart from glory. They had no categories for a crucified Messiah. It didn't just settle upon them to think like that at all. In other words, they understood victory. They understood kingship. They understood a Messiah who would conquer, one who would overthrow Rome, restore Israel, reign in power, and establish righteousness from a throne. To them, glory meant authority, that you could see triumph, that you could celebrate and applaud and hear the trappings that were associated with that kind of glory. To them, glory meant ascent; it meant a crown. It meant a throne.

But they had no categories for a crucified Messiah, absolutely none. A crucified man was not glorious. He was cursed. Roman crucifixion was the ultimate symbol of shame and weakness and rejection. It was public humiliation. It was political defeat. It was the end of hope.

And now, this Messiah was speaking of suffering at the hands of pagans, the anointed king executed like a criminal, the Son of David hanging under a Roman placard. It simply didn't fit their theology, their expectations, or even their imagination. They could follow a radiant Son of David, but they did not know how to follow a suffering servant.

Then Jesus said something very mysterious to them. He said, “Some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.” Then, six days later, He takes three of them up a mountain, and the timing is not accidental. That connection is one of the most important hinges in the gospel narrative.

So, when Jesus says in Matthew 16:28, “Some standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom,” He's not speaking about the second coming. He's speaking about a foretaste of kingdom glory that some of them will witness very soon. And that's why

Matthew writes “Six days later,” or “after six days.” So, it’s not just casual storytelling. It’s very deliberate linking. The promise is followed by fulfilment.

And here, three of them, Peter, James and John, are taken up the mountain. They see what Jesus has just spoken about. They see the Son of man revealed in glory. They see kingdom radiance breaking through ordinary humanity. They see authority, not granted, but inherent within Himself. They see divine majesty shining through His flesh. So, the transfiguration becomes a preview, a kind of down payment of the kingdom.

But there’s a deeper connection. The promise in 16:28 comes right after Jesus has predicted His suffering and told them to take up their cross. In other words, cross first, then glory; death first, and then the kingdom. And the disciples are reeling from this whole idea of a suffering Messiah.

So, before they walk towards Jerusalem, Jesus allows three of them to glimpse the end of the story. The transfiguration is not random glory; it’s a glory revealed in the shadow of the cross. It’s as if Jesus is saying: Yes, I will suffer. Yes, I will be rejected. And yes, I will die. But don’t mistake the cross for defeat. Behind the suffering stands sovereign glory. The mountain assures them that the path to Calvary is not a detour from kingship. It is the road to it.

And beloved, that matters profoundly for us, especially as we enter this period of 40 days. It matters to Him. Why? Because we too will be tempted to see suffering as the absence of glory. But the transfiguration teaches us that sometimes glory is not absent; it’s veiled. The one who walks towards the cross is already the king. And sometimes, before God leads us into darkness, He gives us just enough light to sustain us through it. And so, here is Peter, James, and John upon that high mountain.

Mountains, in scripture, are always places of encounter.

- Remember Sinai – the mountain where God descended in fire and gave the law, forming Israel into a covenant people.
- Remember Carmel – the mountain where Elijah took on the priests of Baal and called down fire from heaven and revealed the one true God.
- Remember Zion – the mountain God chose as His dwelling, establishing His kingship and promising a future reign of righteousness and peace.

Mountains are where heaven touches earth.

Not merely illuminated was Jesus. Not merely encouraged was He, but revealed. What was veiled in ordinary humanity now shone in unveiled glory. The Greek word *metamorphia* talks about something that is hidden becoming visible, like a cocoon that breaks open and reveals a butterfly. That’s what it is – it’s there already. The glory that was veiled in ordinary humanity shines through. His face shines like the sun. His garments, it’s written, becomes dazzling while. He does not borrow glory; He radiates it. It’s not reflected.

Then we read that Moses and Elijah appear, the law and the prophets coming together. The entire Old Testament stands beside Him, speaking with Him, and everything Israel had waited for converges on this one moment.

And Peter is overwhelmed, and he blurts out: “Lord, it’s good for us to be here. Let us build three shelters.” He wants to preserve the moment. He wants to institutionalize the glory. But before he finishes speaking, a bright cloud overshadows them, and a voice speaks, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.” And the disciples fall on their feet. They are terrified, not at the light, but at the voice.

It reminds you of another time when God spoke – at Sinai. It just mirrors this so well. It's so remarkable how close this structure is to Sinai as well. At Sinai, six days of cloud. On the seventh day, God speaks. Moses ascends the mountain. The people tremble at His voice. And afterwards, Moses reflects glory. Now look at the Transfiguration. After six days, again a mountain. Again, a cloud. Again, the voice of God. Again, the fear.

The structure is unmistakable. But here's the crucial difference. At Sinai, Moses reflects glory. At the transfiguration, Jesus does not reflect glory; He radiates it. fully human, fully divine. The glory is within Him. At Sinai, God gives commandments through Moses. At the transfiguration, God gives a command about His Son. "Listen to Him." Not listen to Moses. Not listen to Elijah. Listen to Jesus.

When the cloud lifts, Moses and Elijah are gone. They saw no one except Jesus alone. This line is not incidental. The law and the prophets were always preparatory. But Jesus is final. The law pointed forward. The prophets anticipated fulfillment. But now, the embodiment of fulfillment stands before them. And when revelation reaches its fullness, only Jesus remains. Only Jesus. Listen to Him.

What does that mean for us today? For the disciples, it was okay. They walked with Him. They talked to Him. They had questions they asked Him. So, listening to Him was very normal. But for us, how do we listen? We don't stand in the presence of Jesus physically. We don't stand on a mountain. We don't hear an audible voice that talks to us. So, what does it mean for us, especially as we look at this period of 40 days that is before us? How do we obey the Father's command – Listen to Him?

Here's the thing, beloved. Listening in the Bible is never passive. It's not just about hearing from one ear and out the other. In scripture, listening is always meant to lead to obedience, to align, to submit.

So, let's ask the question again. How do we listen to Him during these days? Let me give you a few thoughts on that.

1. We listen to Him through His word.

We cannot claim to listen to Christ if we neglect the scriptures. We cannot. We can't sit here and say, "I'm not going to read my Bible, but I'm going to listen to God."

God speaks through His revealed word. The objective word of God is right there in the bible. Sometimes we think: God speaks to me. I sense Him saying this and all of that. yes! But God's subjective word, which comes to us through impulses, will never go against His revealed objective word. And it's always good to check the subjective word with the revealed word. But how do you know the revealed word if you don't read it?

So we read slowly. For some of us, it's how quickly can I finish these 10 verses or this one chapter. Read slowly. Take it in. meditate deeply on it. ask questions of the word. What does it mean? Why is it in this place? What's the context? Sit with uncomfortable passages. You didn't understand something? Stay with it. Ask God through His Holy Spirit to reveal what it means. Let His words confront you, challenge you, shape you, mold you.

Don't read for information; read for transformation. How am I going to let this word transform me? Listening means we allow His word to question us, expose us, reshape us..

2. We listen by obeying what we already know.

Sometimes we know what God wants us to do, and we say, "I'll shelve that, and read the Bible again to look for another passage and see what He's saying there." Go back to those things that God is already speaking to you about, which you've put on the shelf.

Listening often means doing the last thing that He told us to do – which could have been anything. It could have been to forgive somebody, release the offense that we keep rehearsing in our minds, and entrust justice to God.

It could mean that He is asking you to repent of something, to excuse somebody, to forgive somebody, repent of ourselves for what we have done. Reconcile a relationship. Ask yourself: Where is my relationship strained? Why is it strained? Do I need to do something about it? Maybe He's inviting you to spend more time in prayer.

Maybe He's asking you to be more giving – give of yourself, give of your resources, give of your finances.

Maybe He's asking you to serve. Do something for Him, something that you've not done before, never thought about it. What are you doing for the Lord?

So, listening is not mystical; it's very practical.

3. Listen in silence.

Maybe He's asking you to listen in silence. Listening in silence is so difficult. Look at Peter. The moment he saw something, he wanted to build something. "Lord, this is great. Let me build three tabernacles, one for You, one for Elijah, one for Moses." And it's like the Lord said, "Hush child, listen to Me. Quiet! This is My beloved Son in whom I am will pleased. Don't interrupt when I want to speak something to you."

Activity is something we are comfortable with. There's so much noise and we like the noise. There's digital noise, emotional noise, intellectual noise. All of that tries to take away from silence that allows God to speak to us. notifications, messages, headlines, endless scrolling that fills every quiet space that we have leaves us no time for reflection.

And sometimes that's the most important thing that you can do – read the word and then sit down and say: What does that mean? What does that mean for me? How can I align my life with this? Lord, what are You saying to me at this moment. And that only happens in times of reflection.

Emotional noise, anxieties, disappointments, resentments, fears that speak so loudly within us that sometimes we can barely hear the gentle voice of Jesus. Or even intellectual noise. Endless analysis that we do, opinions, debates, mental arguments that keep us thinking about truth without ever sitting long enough to receive it. Have you ever had an intellectual argument in your own mind? You come across something and then you argue with yourself as to whether it is true or not. We keep going back and forth over something that has nothing to do with us. We could have left it alone, but we spent a good 20 minutes looking at different arguments that we have had with it. It could have been something about one country invading another, or some person in power doing something.

Sometimes, listening begins not with speaking more, but with being silent more, so that Christ's voice regains clarity.

4. Listen by following Him toward the cross.

On that mountain, the voice did not say: Admire Him. It said, "Listen to Him." And what was spoken six days before? What was Jesus telling them? "Take up your cross and follow Me."

So, listening means walking the path that He walked – to walk in humility, to walk in self-denial, to surrender some of our basic things that we want but we know are not good for us, to even love our enemies as we are commanded to do, to be faithful under pressure.

So, as we look at this Lenten period, sometimes we think the end of this is that I will improve myself. Self-improvement is not the end during Lent. It is alignment with God. It is proximity to God. It is seeking after God. Self-improvement will automatically be the by-product of getting close to God. But the key is proximity to God.

So beloved, if we truly listen during these maybe 40 days, something will shift.

- Our dissatisfaction with our holiness will become holy hunger.
- Our spiritual complacency will become holy pursuit.
- Listening will draw us close because obedience to God clears the distance between Him and us.

The Father's command rings loudly in our ears. Listen to Him. Not to culture, not to impulse, not to fear, not to self, but to Him. Listen to the Lord.

Here's the thing. When Moses and Elijah fade, when competing voices are stilled, when threatening voices are silences, what remains? Jesus alone.

So as we begin this season of spiritual evaluation, spiritual nourishment, we stand between two mountains – the mountain of glory and the hill of Calvary. The One who shines like the sun will soon hang in darkness. The beloved Son will soon cry out in abandonment, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

And yet, the Father's command still remains. Listen to Him. So we listen to Him today by opening His word, by obeying what He says, by cultivating silence, and by following Him toward the cross. And if we do, beloved, these 40 days will not end as just a season. They'll become a doorway into deeper intimacy with God. A doorway into greater holiness. A doorway into walking the remaining 325 days as true disciples of the most high God.

They saw no one except Jesus. May that be true for us as well.
