

Matthew Chapter 17 v 1 - 8

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Date: 23 June 2019

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[0 : 00] The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they declare knowledge.

There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world.

It is a very poetic language to describe God's creative power and his glory expressed in his creation. Paul says this, For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, are being clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Let's pray together. Lord, we appreciate that you have created all things.

And we praise and bless you for it. We praise and bless you for creating us. We praise and bless you that we can meet here, dear God, on this first day of the week.

[1 : 30] This symbol and wonderful indicator of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Help us, Lord, to worship in a way that will honor and glorify you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. How wonderful, Heavenly Father, to meet in your presence together and to worship. To bring our praise, Lord, and our adoration to you, because we love you. We love you, Lord, because of who you are. Your wonderful character.

Your personality. What you are in yourself. Holy. Just. True. Gracious.

Oh, Lord, all virtues flow from you. Everything that's good and decent and lovely. Everything concerning integrity and honesty.

[2 : 49] It all comes from you, Lord. You have no dark side, no hidden side. Nothing of which any would ever be ashamed.

Indeed, we can boast of you. Your word gives us permission, Lord, to boast of you. To boast of you, Father, and your Son and your Holy Spirit. Because of the excellence of your character.

The excellence of your being. And your ways, Lord. Oh, how wonderful. Many of us here, dear God, no doubt have been awe-inspired.

As we've read the scriptures. And read the history of your dealings with your ancient people. And then your dealings through your Son, the Lord Jesus, here on earth.

Lord, we've been so thrilled to read your ways. Even when you're firm and stern and serious, dear God.

[3 : 53] Even when you come in judgment, it's righteous. It's in harmony with your own holy being. And we praise and bless you for your amazing grace.

It's no wonder a brother, years gone by, wrote that hymn, Amazing Grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

Lord, every believer in this congregation this morning would echo those words. We are amazed at that grace, that love to the unlovely.

That love to the undeserved. We, Lord, by nature deserve to be cast out of your presence forever. But you've drawn us to yourself. You've washed us and healed us. Strengthened us and encouraged us and blessed us.

[5 : 01] What an amazing God. The only true and living God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We bless you. And we praise him, Lord. Seated at your right hand now in glory. Who has made all this possible to us.

That one who has brought us from the sin of death, judgment, into life, holiness, godliness, forgiveness.

That one who paid that horrific price. We can't fathom the depth of his suffering.

What we do understand grieves us deeply, Lord. That we had a part in that, causing that.
[6 : 07] Thank you that he loved us. Loved us so much as to give himself for us. And may everyone in this congregation, young or old, come to realize more and more that amazing love for Calvary.

For his glory. For our blessing. In his precious name. Amen. We read from God's word in the New Testament and the gospel record of Matthew and chapter 17.

Matthew and chapter 17. This is the account given by Matthew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of our Lord's transfiguration.

Matthew chapter 17. Reading from verse 1.

After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

[7 : 24] There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun. And his clothes became as white as the light.

Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.

If you wish, I will put up three shelters. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them.

And a voice from the cloud said, This is my son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

Listen to him. Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them.

[8 : 34] Get up, he said. Don't be afraid. When they looked up, there saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, Don't tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.

May God bless the reading of his own inspired word. We turn our attention now to the reading that we had a little earlier, from Matthew chapter 17, and the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can divide the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ roughly into three periods, around a year each.

The early year, the first year, was a year of obscurity, quiet, working in areas of Judea, and occasionally making a trip to Galilee.

[9 : 52] But it was a quiet time. He was gathering his apostles, gathering his disciples to him. And then, around the time of the Sermon on the Mount, he began another period.

A period of popularity. And had a year, about a year roughly, of popularity. And then there followed roughly a year of opposition.

opposition grew. The leadership at Jerusalem, the priests, and the Pharisees and scribes, became increasingly aggressive toward the Lord Jesus.

And it's during this third year period that they begin to plot to have him killed. The transfiguration took place in that third period, in the early part of that third period, when opposition is great and increasing almost by the day.

He takes three men, three of his apostles, three of the twelve, Peter, James, and John. He takes them up a mountain, an unspecified, unnamed mountain.

[11 : 20] And there, they were to witness a phenomenal event. Every Christian knows that the most significant event in the life of the Lord Jesus was Calvary, followed by the resurrection.

His suffering and death, the purpose for which he came, his whole work, was focused upon Calvary.

But this event on that unnamed mount ranks certainly a second, the second most significant event in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ here on earth.

Calvary and resurrection focused upon his great work, his unique work. This mountain experience focuses upon who he really is, this person.

Peter, James, and John were to witness something amazing. we may severantly, say reverently, out of this world. A human being right before their eyes shining with a glory that was supernatural.

[13 : 05] The translations that we have, and I think this is true of all well-used translations call it the transfiguration of Jesus.

Now, figure, that word figure, has to do with outward appearance. If you want to look into the word, you can go into Philippians chapter two and you can see the contrast between two words, morphe, form, and appearance, schema.

The one is to do with what look, it looks like on the outward. The other is to do with what is inside. Morphe, being in the morphe of God, says Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Philippians 2, 6.

Being in the morphe, the form, in other words, the very nature, total, complete nature of God, he then is seen in appearance as a man.

In other words, he's got the form, the nature of a man, and he looks like a man. So when we come to this word transfigure, it's true to say he changed, there was a change in his appearance, but there was something more fundamental.

[14 : 38] The actual word that is used in the New Testament is morphe, form, transformed, not just transfigured, metamorphe, change of form.

For they were privileged, those three apostles, privileged to see deity, shine out godness, shine out through the humanity of Jesus the Christ.

His deity was seen. He glowed with the very glory that's God's own glory, the glory of God.

He was transformed. God's love. And all the New Testament writers speak about this transformation. Let's consider some of those who speak.

What was this transfiguration? What impact did it have? It had a profound impact on the believers there, the eyewitnesses, the apostles, the early Christian church.

[15 : 56] It had a phenomenal impact. you've only got to read Matthew's account as we read earlier and see how he struggles to describe it.

For Matthew says, he was transformed before them. 17, chapter 17 verse 2, his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.

And if you turn to Mark when he's recording it, in chapter 9 and verse 3, his clothes became shining exceedingly white like snow as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

That word launderer is a fascinating word. It comes from, in the original language, from a cardcoma. And it links with the children's address.

It was to do with sheep. It was a comb they used to comb the wool to take away all the bits and pieces they picked up in the field, to comb it and comb it and comb it until it glowed white.

[17 : 15] And so Mark is using that kind of expression when he's trying to get across the whiteness, the brilliant whiteness, that was seen there on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Luke, chapter 9, verse 24, he says, and Luke adds something that the others don't add, as he prayed, as Jesus prayed, as Jesus prayed, the appearance of his face was altered and his robe became white and glistening.

see, as they record this, they're struggling for words that will explain this brilliant dazzling light, this effulgence of light.

So we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, but then what about John? He doesn't mention the Transfiguration. well, many people think he didn't, but actually he did.

If you look at your Bible and turn to John, chapter 1, you may not even need to turn because you will know verse 14 of chapter 1, I guess most of you will know it off by heart, and it runs something like this, depending on your version, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[19 : 01] I'm sure you've read it time and time again, those of you who are people of God. what's that got to do with the transfiguration? Well, there's a word glory there, but what about this intriguing word dwelt?

Dwelt. I don't know why the translators don't just tell us what it really means, translating it accurately and leaving us to form our own conclusions.

There are many words that John could have chosen. he was a Greek scholar. He knew Greek, understood it, and wrote clearly in good Greek.

There were words that he could have chosen to speak about the Lord Jesus coming here to live for a while among us. But he chose a word that is not used in this way anywhere else in the New Testament.

And if you look up your concordance, you can check it. Please, be Berean this morning. Be Berean. Search the scriptures to see whether these things are so.

[20 : 16] Don't take my word for anything. Take his word for everything. Paul could say it. Every apostle would say it. And every true servant of God says it.

examine the scriptures to see whether these things are so. You will find that that word dwelt means tabernacled, tented, camped.

Now what would any godly Jew conclude from these words of John? the word became flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld his glory.

Glory? Tabernacle? What are you saying John? He's saying that there's a connection between the tabernacle of old in the wilderness instituted and designed by God with this man Jesus of Nazareth. We remember when God gave the instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai he gave him detailed instructions and he gave him a wonderful promise.

[21 : 40] When you finish building this intricate involved tabernacle I give you a promise and his promise was this I will come to you and in Exodus chapter 40 and verse 34 we read then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting and the glory of Yahweh the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and John is telling us beyond any shadow of doubt that in Jesus the glory of God dwells so we have John when he says we beheld his glory he's not talking about a general experience that

Christians might have any time he's not speaking about an experience that all the twelve apostles ever had he's speaking about his experience that he and his brother James and his colleague Peter experienced on the mount we beheld his glory so we have Matthew Mark Luke and John but then what about the apostle Peter does he have anything to say about it oh turn please to if you have your Bibles there you don't need to turn but if you like to turn so that you can see it in the book in your hands turn to 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 16 where Peter says or writes 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 for he received honor and glory from God the father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying this is my son whom I love with him I am well pleased we ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain what an impact it had Peter records the impact we saw his glory and the majestic glory father speaking to him and speaking to them this is my son whom I love did anyone else see that glory are there other references in the scriptures to that glory well not on that mount of transfiguration but there were others who saw that glory do you remember that Pharisee that tenacious bold Pharisee highly educated intellectually gifted trained and top of his class in his studies so adamant against Jesus Christ that he was zealous to search out had authorization from the Sanhedrin authorization from the priest to search out anyone who was a follower of Jesus Christ to arrest any Jew that dare say they had allegiance to Jesus Christ he had the authorization and he was on his way to Damascus Syria authorized to enter into any home of any Jew that was connected with this way as they called it

Christians arrest them and imprison them and as he's on that Damascus road he has a remarkable encounter that Pharisee that religious zealot held bent on persecuting those who love Jesus there on the road he was confronted by a bright light a bright dazzling light this is how Luke records it Acts 9 verse 3 as Paul journeyed Saul journeyed he came near Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven a light so bright that it blinded his eyes he had to be led into the city of

[27 : 21] Damascus and he was three days blind until God sent his servant Ananias to Saul that he might receive his sight and know that he met with God and his life was never going to be the same again that's what happens when you become a Christian no bright shining lights now that was a privilege for Saul of Tarsus but the blessing of coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and having your life turned upside down changed what you once loved goes you now have a new love what you once lived for ends you now have something new to live for new purpose new goals new aspirations new ways of enjoyment new pleasures the old pleasures that drop a transformation took place in that

Saul of Tarsus and from being hostile wanting to kill Christians he became one of the most fervent ambassadors for Jesus Christ that this world has ever known I hope every believer here has caught something of that ambassadors for Jesus Christ it isn't just standing on the street corner and preaching it's your life and being ready to give a word in season to those who will give you the opportunity sanctifying the Lord in your hearts and being ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you ambassadors every one of us man woman young person child male female rich or poor intelligent or not such it doesn't matter if you love the

Lord Jesus you are his ambassador and you have a heavy responsibility laid upon your shoulders we have a heavy responsibility laid upon our shoulders Paul saw that Shekinah glory the glory of

God shining forth from the person and that voice that said Saul Saul why persecute thou me he could have said Lord I'm not persecuting you I'm just after these Christians but Jesus takes it personally whenever any of his people are hurt or hurting Jesus still now in heaven still now takes it personally it affects him he senses it he feels it he's a real man and he's always going to be a real man what took place in the body of his mother

Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit when a body was created and made for him that's never going to be changed we're going to see him we who love him are going to see him as a man a real human being and we'll see him the man Jesus the God man Jesus the Christ Saul saw that glory but then years passed and there was an old man on an island it's been calculated that he was somewhere around 95 or 96 if any of you Christian men or women thought that you were going to enjoy your retirement forget it as Christians there is no retirement I get hurt everybody every time anybody says to me how are you managing in your retirement it hurts you don't retire we just change activity and occupation we change how we use our time

I hope it is not just going out to the bowls green not just down to the golf club but a change of focus and a golden opportunity once you're freed from the responsibility of earning your living once you've got that delightful experience or not so delightful experience of receiving a pension you've got a golden opportunity to serve God even more than you were before without restraint so sisters don't be bullying your husbands into going down to Morrison's with you kick him out there and say what are you doing for the Lord Jesus today and you fellas don't be insisting that she does all your baking do a bit with her and then she can be free to do things I've got to be careful you know because things are very touchy now we've got to be careful what we say about the roles of men and women let's love one another so much that we encourage one another to the work of

[33 : 22] God don't be worried about the tasks that you do to liberate somebody else to do the work of God do it joyfully do it cheerfully work together as units in the home work together as units in the church do whatever is necessary to further the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to build up the saints and here is this old man 95 or 96 so they reckon well if the Lord spares us 95 or 96 this old man this pastor this preacher this evangelist this apostle the last of the apostles they've put him out the government has put him out into the salt mines of Patmos isle of Patmos they put him out into the salt mines to work they didn't want to go so far as to kill him and make him a martyr so they put him out into the salt mines and it was obvious they were putting him out there to kill him off and on that island of

Patmos the apostle John in his mid nineties received the glorious revelation oh it's got a lot of difficulties in it a lot of things that are hard to understand but there's an awful lot that's easy to understand there's an awful lot upon which every brother and sister in Jesus Christ agrees some beautiful things he recorded this old man privileged and what how does he describe that visit well if you go to the first chapter of the book of revelation this is what he says in verse 13 one like the son of man clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band and he describes him and sums it up in this way out of his mouth went the sharp two edged sword and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength verse 16 his countenance what he looked like it was just as though the sun was shining you know what it's like you can't look at the sun it'll blind you not to look into the sun in the heat of the day and John says it was just like that to this one appeared it was that glow again that glow that shekinah glory from the

Lord Jesus the risen Lord Jesus Christ so John saw it all over again and the writer to the Hebrews well he tries to describe as best he can using human language tries to describe the relationship between the father and the son in his opening words in Hebrews chapter one just turn there please to see see how the writer expresses it he says in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe the son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being the radiance of his glory literally the effulgence the brilliance of God's glory you see they're at the limit of human language but it's quite clear what they mean in

Jesus Christ glory glory there is God's own glory he's God like the father there is no doubt God like the father he's not the father but he's God like the father just as John tries to express it in the opening verses of his gospel in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God God with God God as it is literally God in a face to face relationship God toward God God in a face to face relationship with God scripture insists there aren't two gods there is only one

God and if you can't get your head around it join the rest of us but it should be no surprise that God in his being father son and holy spirit one God and yet

God the father God the son and God the holy spirit it should be no surprise to any of us that God in his being is far greater than our minds can actually cope with and so he reveals it in the only way that we can take it there's one God he says look at Isaiah 45 five times there's only one God there's only one God there's only one God and then see how the glory of God shines in Jesus Christ the Lord Jesus so the writer to the Hebrews is caught up with it he is not only one who has the glory of God he is the one who is the glory of God and then what about the glory of God revealed to all believers this is where it starts getting very personal and fascinating you turn to 2

[39 : 43] Corinthians chapter 4 there's a lovely word of encouragement to those of us who are longing to see people converted 2 Corinthians chapter 4 great word of encouragement if you're feeling a little bit battered and bruised you haven't seen many people converted recently not many are turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in your immediate experience and you're feeling a little bit like it's getting a weary task read through the fourth chapter 2 Corinthians since through God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart heart well there's all the danger of losing heart in Christian work isn't there particularly days like this all the danger you may be a visitor from a tiny group of believers somewhere in the country or beyond the country and it's tough tough but what does he say since through

God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways we do not use deception nor do we distort the word of God all that the people of God would learn this you don't manipulate God's word you don't adjust God's word our responsibility under God is to preach and proclaim God's word as it is without alteration tell the truth and expect God as and when he will to honor it in the lives of men women young people and children we do not use deception nor do we distort the word of God on the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God he then goes on to say if our gospel is not understood and not grasped if there isn't the response it's because the God of this world old Nick the devil Satan has blinded the eyes of the unbeliever to stop them to stop them what to stop them seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ the devil doesn't want anybody to have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and what we have here in this sixth verse is a great encouragement to every believing one of us here this morning man woman young person or child if you love the Lord Jesus Christ it's because God has touched your life personally let me say that again if you love the Lord Jesus Christ today it's because God the God of heaven and earth has touched your life personally and he said let the light shine and he kicked out the darkness and he showed you the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ that is the greatest blessing that any human being can have and when you're feeling hammered and when you're feeling low and when you feel that it's really difficult to keep on treading the road to faithfulness and obedience and love when you feel it's tough being a Christian remember what God has done in your life to you to enable you to have the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ so that when you read the Bible Jesus shines out from it you read the Old Testament scriptures and the promises of God and oh what a delight they're a thrill to your soul they shine forth the excellences of the riches of Jesus

Christ the glory of God in Jesus Christ but notice it says the knowledge of the glory of God because we haven't seen it yet we have the knowledge of it and we have the record of it in the scriptures but there's something more wonderful promised to us every believer one day will see him in his glory that is the promise of the scriptures that is the promise of God's word one day every eye will see him the city had no need this is the revelation 21 verse 23 the city had no need this is a new world the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it for the glory of God illuminated it and the lamb is its light we're going to see it as surely as surely as Job knew oh what a saint what a godly man hammered beyond what we would think ourselves capable of enduring everything done against him

[45 : 52] God knew he could trust Job and allowed Satan to do his worst you wonder why there's so much suffering in the world why so many of God's people suffered suffer and are suffering well let all of us who have to suffer or are going through suffering think of godly Job Job had faith in God but there's something even more wonderful God had faith in Job have you seen my servant Job he says is there anyone like him in the whole world Satan says take everything from him and he'll

curse you and God gave permission for the devil to take everything from him everything that he held dear can you stand in that place brother sister can you put yourself in that place where God gives permission to take from you everything you love beside

Jesus it's a tough call we're serving with a group of believers in Scarborough where we have five men who struggle to get to worship seriously ill and they struggle to get to worship but they get there one way or another to be among the Lord's people and to worship God I had a very dear brother that I worked with in Ashbourne colleague in eldership lovely man ten years my junior and he contracted an awful disease and was taken from us he had 12 months of suffering and time and again when I met with him he said oh I do miss preaching he was a lovely gifted preacher and a godly pastor got a heart of gold it's a mystery fine men like that taken from us and he would say oh I do miss preaching and I would say confident of the approval of heaven my brother you're preaching your most powerful sermon every day of your life and his testimony was flawless and that of his wife too flawless us one day we may understand how God really works but even if we don't it doesn't matter as long as we're with him and with those who love him that's what counts

Job says the worms devour and destroy my body yet in my flesh I will see him the redeemer whom I will see and he wants it to be clear exactly what he means whom I shall see with my own eyes not another how my heart yearns brother sister does your heart yearn yearn for glory yearn to be with him yearn to see him as he is well if you're spared to live another day it's because he wills that you have work to do here on this earth until your time comes or even more wonderful he returns to God be the glory Amen yes

Lord Heavenly Father we do praise your son for Calvary's pain and we are delighted Lord that we who love you and know you will have that never never ending eternity before us to keep on praising you and him by the spirit we say dear God blessing and honor and power and glory be to the one who sits upon the throne and to the lamb forever and ever Amen