WHAT A VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN!

What a view! Have you ever had one of those moments? I remember being on a high peak of the Rocky Mountains and looking out. You could see for miles and miles. What a beautiful sight. What a view!

Do you think that was the first thing Peter, James and John thought as they reached the top of the mountain with Jesus? What a view! They could see all around. They were tired from the climb. Jesus wanted to take some time to pray. They were ready to rest. But soon it would be all about the view on the mountain!

As we travel up the mountain with them, we also stand in awe: what a view from the mountain! Jesus’ transfiguration allows us to view important truths about the past, present, and future. Take some time and look, and you will also say: WHAT A VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN!

The first view we consider from the mountain is like a view through the lens of telescope. It is a view that draws your attention to events far away. In this case, we look far back into the past. From the Mount of Transfiguration, we can see all the way back to the beginning. As you look through the lens, you see sin enter the world. You see the power and effects of sin grow so powerful it must be cut back with the waters of the flood. You see the Lord carve his Law into tablets of stone. You see sin after sin after sin from all the pagan Gentiles and even from God’s own chosen people. The cup of his wrath slowly fills.

But look again! In the midst of all the sin and corruption that fogs the lens, you also see God’s plan unfold. You see how he promises a Savior immediately after the Fall into sin. You see he sends the Flood to preserve his promise of salvation. You see how he raises up Moses and gives him the Law to set Israel apart from the sin-filled world so he can use them to bring his promised Savior into the world. You see him raise up prophets like Elijah to call his people to repentance. You see him repeat over and over again promises of forgiveness and salvation and life forever with the Lord.

As you draw the focus of this telescope a little nearer, you focus on Jesus. You see he is that Savior. You see him on this mountain as he steels his resolve to complete God’s plan of salvation because from here he sets out directly for Mt Calvary. You see him perfectly keep God’s Law. You see him perfectly care for people. You see him seek out time in public worship and personal prayer. You see him finish his journey to Calvary and the cross. You see him discussing all of these things with Moses and Elijah on the mountain as his disciples looked on in wonder.

What a view from the mountain! What a view into the past as we see the accomplishments of Jesus in fulfilling the plan of salvation, which was the topic of conversation on the Mt of Transfiguration! But this view from the mountain gives us a chance to ponder the reality of the present. A telescope will not help us see things so close to us; a mirror is much better for that job. So what do you see in the mirror?

A mirror allows us to see ourselves. So do you see yourself here on the mountain? In many ways, we see ourselves in the disciples - in Peter, James and John. Think about that for a moment or two. Jesus asks you to come with him. Who would say no? But then he says you are going hike way up this mountain, and you start to think: Isn’t there a quiet spot closer than that? When Jesus finally stops, you are happy to rest. You would like to join Jesus in
prayer, but you are so tired! You doze and then you wake. Bright light everywhere! It is Jesus, but it is not Jesus like you have ever seen him. There are two others you immediately know as Moses and Elijah. They talk about Jesus going to Jerusalem to die - to die on a cross!

Look in the mirror; would you say exactly what Peter does? When he sees things about to end, he says: Master, it is good for us to be here. Let’s make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Don’t let this end! Don’t go to Jerusalem! Let’s just stay here. Keep Moses and Elijah here too! Isn’t that what would be best for you, for them, for us! It makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it?

But Luke does not allow us to see any illusions in the mirror! Immediately, he says: He did not realize what he was saying. Looking in a mirror allows us to see things as they really are. Sometimes the opinion we have of them, how they seem to us, is not really how they are. Master, it is good for us to be here. As good as that sounded to Peter, as good as it would have been for him at that time, he did not know what he was saying in the light of God’s plan.

As he looked into the mirror, Peter focused too much on himself. How great it would be to stay on the mountain, bathed in glory, talking to giants of the faith, cut off from the troubles of the world below. Could it get much better than that? It would have been very good for Peter, but only for Peter. Because if Jesus stayed with him on the mountain, he would not go to Calvary. Then he would not pay for your sins or my sins or Peter’s sins. Peter could not have entered heavenly glory and neither could you or I. What seemed good to him, what seemed good for right now, what he thought was good for others, was not good in God’s plan.

That tends to happen, doesn’t it? When you look in the mirror, you look there to see yourself. As you look, you focus on yourself but often do not pay too much attention to the rest of the picture. When you see beyond yourself, you focus on the things closest to you. What is more, when you experience good, you want to cling to it. When you experience sadness, you flee from it. I’ll seek happiness for myself as quickly as I can for as long as I can, often becomes the motto. But what happens when what I think is good harms others? What happens when that departs from God’s Word? What happens when it conflicts with his eternal plan? What happens when short term gain would mean long term loss?

There are times when the Lord must also say to our ways and wants and even our prayers: You don’t realize what you are saying. We do not see as far as the Lord sees. We do not see as much as the Lord sees. We do not understand as much about what we see as the Lord does. But God reveals the answer to that problem also. The Father interjects: This is my Son, whom I love; listen to him. Listen to Jesus! Listen to his Word! Do not just look, but also listen! Do not trust your eyes, but trust your God and his promises! Remember we live by faith, not by sight. When you feel like closing your eyes in fear and confusion like the disciples did that day, open them again and find Jesus alone in your gaze. Listen to him and trust the promises he makes! Promises of love and forgiveness, of guidance and direction, of a plan and eternal purpose for you!

That brings us to the future and the glimpse of glory we see there on the mountain. We have looked through a telescope to the past. We peered into a mirror for the present. The view from the mountain is also like looking into a crystal ball to see the future.

What do you see as you gaze at the view in the crystal ball? Moses and Elijah, but isn’t that a view of the past? It could be, but look again. Here we see: Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with him. They appeared in glory. Moses appeared that way once before. After receiving the Law on Mt Sinai, his face glowed with glory from being in the presence of God. But that glory faded over time. Elijah never saw such glory until the Lord took him to heaven in a chariot of fire.
But here we see these two faithful believers who appeared in glory. They are already experiencing the full glory of heaven. They are living in eternity with the Lord. Their bodies shine with glory, free from any of the effects of sin. They come to the mountain and speak with Jesus. They see Jesus in his glory and they speak to him face to face without fear. They can do this because there is no trace of sin remaining in them. And notice also they are talking about Jesus’ death, but they talk about it without a hint of sadness or regret or fear. How can that be? They know God’s plan. The journey to Jerusalem will not be a funeral march but a procession of victory! They know the plan and how Jesus must complete it. They want what God wants. Their emotions are in harmony with God’s.

As you look into this crystal ball, you do not just see Jesus’ eternal victory and Moses and Elijah in glorious splendor. You see yourself with them. Jesus’ victory is your victory. The glory Moses and Elijah have because of Jesus’ accomplishments, you will share one day. The glory of heaven also waits for you. Free from every trace of sin. Body glorified. Seeing Jesus. Speaking with fellow believers. No sadness. No regrets. No fear. Perfect harmony with God in all things. What a view we see here!

Because of Jesus’ accomplishments in the past, you can be sure of your eternal future with him and all the believers of all time. The knowledge of that eternal victory also gives you the confidence to trust him in the present. He did not fail you for eternity; he will not fail you in the here and now. Enjoy the view from the mountain today, but look forward as well to the journey of victory we take with Jesus during Lent on the way to Calvary. Amen.

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