**2 Kings 2:1-12** Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. **2** And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. **3** And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” **4** Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. **5**  The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” **6** Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. **7** Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. **8** Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. **9** When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” **10** And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” **11** And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. **12** And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

**“Christ Remains Glorious For Us”**

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Using the word “transfiguration” almost guarantees to throw off most people. Yet, none finds it strange when they hear the word, “transformer.” Crowds actually run off to movie theaters to watch robots change into various kinds of vehicles. The famous theme song summarizes it well, “There is more than meets the eye.” That is the heart of what we celebrate today on the last Sunday of Epiphany. There is more to Jesus than meets the eye. The transfiguration brings us full circle. It takes us back to what John the Baptizer proclaimed about Jesus after His baptism, “And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:34).

Moses and Elijah appearing before Jesus on that mountain was a glorious sight reflecting the Old Testament. Yet, both of these figures knew what it meant to let go on God’s terms. Moses was to die and not enter the Promised Land with Israel. Elijah had to leave behind Elisha for the Lord was to take him to heaven. All their glory was only for a time. However, at the transfiguration God was making known how things were going to change. When Jesus came down from that mountain, “he charged (his disciples) to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” His cross was the terms that were to change everything for all time. The Father lets us share in the gift of His Son for His glory surpasses all others.

Now more than enough glory came from Elijah. He was the great miracle worker God sent when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was a mess. He caused a great famine to fall on the land as a call to repentance. He defeated 450 Baal prophets on top of Mount Carmel. He met the Lord on Mount Horeb just as Moses did. Elisha knew the significance of losing Elijah. He called him and changed his life. Even when God gave departing Words about His mighty prophet, Elisha still stayed close. He said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” Of course, the knowledge God gave of Elijah leaving was only to strength the faith of Elisha. It was actually to prepare him to receive the glory of what God would pass on to him.

Christ put an end to what generations had to struggle with in the Old Testament. There is no other glory to hand over for Jesus alone is God’s Son. Peter made this good confession of Jesus and the transfiguration six days later confirmed it without limit. The Father spoke out from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” The glory passed on today is what comes by baptism into Jesus. Having washed us clean by His Word, all other glories fade away before Him. The standard of the Gospel is this, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Adopted by God’s grace we have a guarantee in Jesus more glorious, secure, and hopeful for every generation.

After crossing the Jordan River, Elijah finally departed and never looked back. It was sudden, overwhelming, and a miracle not soon forgotten for Elisha. God butted into their conversation. Chariots and horses of fire charged onto the scene. Elijah went up into heaven with a whirlwind ushering him to eternal glory. The only other to experience such freedom from death was Enoch in Genesis. Whatever the splendor of salvation, it did not comfort those left behind. It caused a great separation for Elisha. “…He took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.” This act of sorrow over the removal of a mighty prophet caused distress over what God had done.

The glory of God’s Son turns out to be a whirlwind that carries Him to the cross. Where plenty want that quick departure from life like Elijah, Jesus from His transfiguration steps down into the depths of it all. His suffering and death was drawn-out, selfless, and a miracle seared into the lives of His disciples. Christ would ascend with glory as well, but not without His wounds of victory over the grave and hell itself. Rather than feeling separation like Elisha, God now gloriously draws close for our comfort. Death is the mightiest of whirlwinds, but the love of God’s sacrifice declares that none need die apart from Him. Baptism has become the daily promise that Jesus desires to deal with our down and dirty lives. To listen to Him is glorious. His Word remains steadfast when all other ways fail.

Elisha received a double portion of the spirit given to Elijah. It was a promise God fulfilled for him to carry on in the prophetic ministry. He would do many miracles and deliver God’s Word with glory no less than Elijah. This is the Spirit Christ gave in all fullness after His resurrection. He sent out His Church to ends of the earth. Shyness is not the character of the Gospel. St. Paul said as an apostle, “Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses…” Likewise, to trust in some other glory goes against the Spirit God gives. St. Paul says again, “We refuse to practice cunning or tampering with God’s Word…” Elisha had what he needed to be a faithful prophet like Elijah. The apostles and entire church took up the Word and Sacraments as the fullness of Christ no less glorious than at His transfiguration.

The glory Christ shares is to send His Spirit to embolden our lives in Him. Pondering over the negative or positive things of life can never replace the baptized simply living in the promise of God. Luther did this wholeheartedly saying, “The Christian faith has foretold with certainty how it and other faiths would fair in the world…Other faiths will perish but the Christian faith will endure until Judgment day…” (House Postils vol. 7 302). By listening to Jesus, His Word still brings the Spirit in all truth for our time. Yet, when our departure comes it may not have the glory of Elijah, but it will be no less of an inheritance. The sacrifice of Christ has replaced chariots and horses of fire with His true body and blood that keeps us safe to life everlasting.

As we enter into Lent, the transfiguration gives us confidence in the only Son of God. He will not leave us to fend for ourselves. He will be faithful to the end. He does stand in the place of sinners. He carries out victory by way of the cross. The glory of Christ goes down into the darkness to lift all up with the light of His love. The resurrection only confirms what Moses and Elijah already knew at the transfiguration. “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.” The Father lets us share in the gift of His Son for His glory surpasses all others. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.