**2 Kings 2:1-12 (ESV)**

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.

**2 Cor. 3:12-4:6 (ESV)**

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, [13] not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. [14] But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. [15] Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. [16] But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. [17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

[4:1] Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. [2] But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. [3] And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to f those who are perishing. [4] In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. [5] For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. [6] For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Mark 9:2-10 (ESV)**

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, [3] and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. [4] And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. [5] And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." [6] For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. [7] And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." [8] And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. [9] And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. [10]So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.

“The Church Is Glorious In Christ”

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come,” (Rev 1:4) Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen. The 2018 Winter Olympics began last week in South Korea. These wondrous athletics on ice and snow are before an even more scenic mountain range. Of course, while billions watch the next couple of weeks as the nations compete for glory. Plans for the 2018 Winter Olympics already started in 2011! It took seven years to coordinate and construct what this glorious event would be. However, after everyone returns home and some with a bit more to bear like gold, silver, and bronze medals. The mountains will retain their glory showing the things of men are short-lived compared to a greater creation.

Leave it to the God of creation to reveal His glory greater than the mountains. In the Old Testament, this happened like at Mountain Sinai when Moses received the Ten Commandments. It happened with Elijah on Mount Carmel who against the Baal prophets had his altar to the true God consumed by fire. On this Sunday as the Epiphany season ends and Lent soon begins. We celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus that also happened to be up on a mountain. Rather than seeing God’s glory in what Jesus did, we see the full glory of Jesus. His humble humanity uncovers the divine fact that He is God’s Son. The transfiguration of Jesus reveals the glory that we, the church, share with Christ will be at last glorious.

1. **When we look back upon Epiphany, there was a Social Gospel.**
2. As God clothed Adam and Eve before casting them out of the garden, so Jesus came caring for people.

* He provided extra wine from water to save a wedding from failure.
* He healed bodily ailments restoring people back to better health.
* He drove out demons bringing peace again to troubled lives that were lost.

1. The charity of Jesus certainly reveals a need for social concern.

* People matter, but like the disciples, we are naturally selfish.
* We throw money at service organizations and offer ideas only keep me out of the details.
* Yes, we lack love and that is because as St. Paul says, “Love is the fulfillment of the Law.”

1. However, the transfiguration of Jesus shows a Social Gospel is really no Gospel.

* Churches and Christians caught up with social concerns fall prey to having, “little or no reference to reconciliation with God through Christ and to the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. For many it is essentially a this-worldly gospel of works, not a Gospel of grace for this life and heaven.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* A Social Gospel ignores how Jesus shined on the mountain as God sent to die for sinners, which is why Moses and Elijah talked with Him.
* The first words from Jesus in the Gospel of Mark is, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (1:15)

1. **When we look forward into Lent, there is also a Hidden Gospel.**
2. God is not hiding His promise in Christ only the fact is it comes built upon the cross.

* A week before His transfiguration Peter made a great confession of Jesus only to hear that Jesus would be rejected, killed, and rise three days later.
* While fighting over their glory, Jesus told His disciples that He came to serve and, “give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45).
* To follow Christ was glory in the cross as He said during Holy Week, “But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” (John 15:21)

1. Who likes not having answers and that is especially true in terms of suffering.

* A report notes how teens today are twice as likely to be atheistic and the reason is more simple than scientific.
* Rejecting God comes down to how they “…are more likely than older Americans to say the problem of evil and suffering is a deal breaker for them.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* You could rephrase it this way, “If God is so glorious and great, why allow such horrors to happen in life?”

1. The transfiguration of Jesus reveals God does not hide the Gospel.

* If we stress only the physical suffering of Christ during Lent, it is to miss how the Father turned His back upon His Son for us.
* Anyone can recognize a good place like on the mountain, but Peter’s own sinful flesh turned him away from the glory of Jesus being the perfect sacrifice.
* Jesus told them to keep quiet about what they saw of glory on the mountain, “until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”
* This means suffering and evil is to see God in Christ alone as the crucified Lord judged in our place who removes the grief over life.

1. **When we look to Jesus, glory shines by the Pure Gospel in every way.**
2. The glory of Jesus revealed fully as God was to be a benefit for His disciples.

* Heaven and earth came together in Jesus and this is what we have during the Divine Service before Word and Sacrament.
* For those that struggle to pay attention, the Father in heaven summed up the transfiguration of Jesus declaring, “Listen to him!”
* We leave Epiphany knowing life is about service, but this is only because God has first loved us again today with Christ delivering His forgiveness.
* We enter Lent now prepared to see the suffering of Jesus as the true glory of God given for the brokenness of life in this world.

Peter had hoped to build tents on the mountain of transfiguration. Yet, Christ came down to build a far more glorious presence fit for our life. He dwells now underneath the ordinary elements of bread and wine. The Lord’s Supper is where we boldly confess, “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy! (Psalms 99:9). His sacrifice delivers Easter because this man, Jesus, has always been God. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” The transfiguration of Jesus reveals the glory that we, the church, share with Christ will be at last glorious. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=S&word=SOCIALGOSPEL [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)