

TEXT: Luke 9:28-36

THEME: It's Good to Be with Jesus

1. Jesus Wants Us Near Him
2. Jesus Brings Us to Glory
3. Jesus Has the Father's Seal of Approval

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

JESUS WANTS US TO BE NEAR HIM

Can you think of any time when you were honored to be chosen? Perhaps when you were on the playground, all the other children wanted you to be the first-baseman on their baseball team. Perhaps your employer chose to hire you over dozens of other worthy applicants. Perhaps you think about your husband or your wife—how someone just that wonderful would choose to marry you. It feels good to be chosen. When other people choose us, it shows that we are important to them. It tells us that they love us and that they want us to be near them.

How wonderful it must have been for Peter, James, and John! Jesus chose them to share a very personal experience with him. He took the three of them along when he went up onto a mountainside to pray. These were very trying times for Jesus. Jesus knew that very soon he would face the torture of his cross. As he prepared to carry out his mission of paying for our sins, he wanted to have some quiet time to pour out his soul to God. But he didn't want to be alone. He wanted Peter, James, and John to be with him at his side. What an honor that Jesus chose them! His choosing clearly said, "I love the three of you. It would mean so much to me if you would join me as I pray."

It was quite an honor, yet we have no reason to envy Peter, James, and John. The honor Jesus bestowed on them he also gives to us. Jesus chose us too. Jesus wants us to be with him. Paul said that God "**chose us...before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight**" (Ephesians 1:4). Through the message of the gospel, Jesus calls to us, "**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest**" (Matthew 11:28). Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus promised, "**I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am**" (John 14:3).

It feels good to be chosen, especially when the one who chooses us is Jesus! Although we don't deserve this honor, his choosing us clearly tells us, I love you. You are important to me. I want you to be with me."

JESUS BRINGS US TO GLORY

If we are going to be with Jesus, we are going to be in glory, in glory for all eternity. And Jesus gives us a glimpse of what that will be like in our lesson for today. Moviegoers are familiar with "coming attractions." Before the feature starts, the theater shows a little clip of a soon-to-be-released movie. It's good advertising. It whets our appetites for next month's blockbuster. Many moviegoers love to watch the previews almost as much as they love to watch the movies.

When Jesus revealed his glory on the mountain, he gave us a little preview of what our future holds. There on the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses had died some 1,400 years before the time of Christ. Elijah had been dead for about 700 years. Yet there they were, alive and well and glowing with heavenly brightness. Unlike Peter, James, and John, Moses and Elijah were not terrified to look at Jesus in his glory. They stood and talked with him as if they did this every day.

What do we see in Moses and Elijah if not a preview of our heavenly future? Their appearance on the mountain proves that those who die in Christian faith, like our brother Harold van Driessche this past week, will not be abandoned to their graves. At the moment of death, a believer's soul goes to God in heaven. On the Last Day, Jesus will raise our human bodies from the grave. He will reunite our bodies and our souls and glorify us until we shine with his own heavenly light. He will purge out of us every trace of sin and all the suffering that sin causes. The book of Revelation describes the scene like this: **"They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).** Together with all believers, we will see God face-to-face and carry on like long lost friends.

What a beautiful sight it must have been for Peter, James, and John. They saw their believing ancestors wearing crowns of everlasting life. They saw Jesus revealed in all his glory. Someday we will too.

JESUS HAS THE FATHER'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

We know that we will because Jesus has the Father's seal of approval. Since it first appeared in 1909, the Good Housekeeping Seal has given consumers a sense of confidence while they are in the marketplace. As the product testing laboratory of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, the Good Housekeeping Institute awards the seal only to select products. The magazine will not publish advertisements unless the Institute approves of the product and its claims.

Wouldn't it be nice if everything important came with a seal of approval given by someone that we know and trust? We could choose the ideal career, marry the perfect spouse, and embrace the right religion just by looking for the seal of approval printed on the side label. Wouldn't that make our lives much easier? Wouldn't it eliminate a lot of worry and concern?

If you want to choose the right religion, it's really just that easy. Jesus comes with a seal of approval. More important, this seal of approval comes from the most reliable and trustworthy source of all. God the Father placed his seal of approval on Jesus when he said, **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."**

With all of the religions in the world today, all of the different gods and all the different churches, do you ever worry that maybe you have chosen the wrong one? Are you being hoodwinked by a clever con man who lived 2,000 years ago? Is there a better Savior out there? God points us to Jesus and says, "This is the one I have chosen. He's the one you need to listen to." God does not give his approval to any inferior product. God can settle

for nothing less than absolute perfection. That's what Jesus is. He lived an absolutely perfect life in obedience to God. He offered the perfect sacrifice for sin when he gave his life on the cross. He gives the perfect salvation to everyone who trusts in him, and he gives it for the perfect price: absolutely free. When God looks at all the work that Jesus did for us, he says, "I approve."

So here is what I say about Jesus: If he's good enough for God the Father, he's more than good enough for me. I pray you say the same! Amen.

PRA Y E R O F T H E C H U R C H

We praise you, O Father, for the precious gift of your Son and for his glorious transfiguration on the holy mountain. Thank you for placing your seal of approval on him for us. Give us the firm resolve to listen to your Son, the eager readiness to believe his promises, and the joyful willingness to heed his commandments. By the preview of coming attractions that you gave us through Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus, show us that blessed are the dead who die in faith, for they shall know the power of Christ's resurrection and shall be "changed from glory into glory." Comfort the family of Harold van Driessche with this glimpse of glory that Harold is now enjoying and the sure hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Lord of love, we thank you for the 89 years of grace you have granted to your servant Gerrie Esterhai. We praise you for being with her in good days and evil, in joy and sorrow, in sickness and health. We praise you above all for having provided her with the rich comfort of your Word and sacraments. Continue to make these treasures her joy and delight.

Shine in our hearts, transfigured Lord. Warm us with your love. Brighten our days with your grace. Surround us with your glory day after day. Glorious Savior, may your light bring us new life. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER