

Have you ever had a day or a few hours in your life, when you said, man its good to be here. As a pastor I have had several “Good to be here moments”. Around 15 years ago, when we first did our first Living Christmas Card at Trinity, we had bumper to bumper traffic going around our church for two nights in a row. The Bay City Police department were actually needed to direct traffic. As I handed out invites to Christmas worship at the end of the LCC, I told Pastor Muetzel, “Man it doesn’t get any better than this. An outreach pastors dream come true”. Again, at Christmas time when the day school kids sing for their program, the church is packed. Again, I say, wow this is fantastic. Everybody is so happy. Its good to be here.

Have you had a “Good to be here moment!” Maybe one of your children was involved in a basketball tournament, or some other sporting event. Their team wins 1st place, and a trophy. The game or match was intensely exciting. But they won. Or maybe it was a vacation that you took, and you were in this place where the view was incredible. You just stood there taking it all in, and saying, man, its good to be here. But these super highs only last a short-time, and then its back to the realities of life, which many times can be quite depressing.

Today, we want you to see the therapy Jesus Christ employs to help us when we need a real pick-me up, when life is handing us out dark and depressing moments. In fact, these pick-me up moments are available weekly at Trinity. Let’s discover then why we Christians can say, “It is Good to Be here.”

Shocker moments. You know what I am talking about. Car accident. Cancer diagnosis. Bypass surgery. Sudden death. A child involved in a reputation busting incident. Initially, we are in a state of shock. How can it be? This can't be happening to us. What are we going to do now? Jesus had just given his disciples a shocker moment. He had told them, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” What a downer! Their master would be rejected by religious leaders and be killed. But the disciples just didn’t want to believe it. And you know if they had problems now believing this would happen, how would they react when it did happen. They would surely all run away from him, never giving it a thought that this might be according to a divine plan, and the ultimate victory would be theirs. Something was needed to strengthen their faith, that this Jesus was more than just a man. That he was someone who could carry out the plan of God to save the world from its sins.

So Jesus takes three of his closest disciples with him and leads them to a high mountain where he begins to pray. All of a sudden as the disciples are dozing, they are awakened by the sound of voices. They open their eyes and are blinded by a piercing light. Jesus’ clothes, previously dusty and stained from the trek up the mountain, were white - whiter than any bleach could make them. Actually they were more than white; they shone with the intensity of a lightning flash! Then there was Jesus’ face. It was as bright as the noonday sun! The term in our Bible translated "transfigured" is the Greek word we get "metamorphosis" from. It is the term we use to describe the process of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, spinning a cocoon and then being seemingly transformed from one creature to another. As the disciples described it, it was as if for a moment Jesus’ human body, the shell that made Him like us was peeled back. These disciples got a glimpse of who Jesus really is, God in the flesh.

Let is be said today, Jesus Christ is no weakling. He may look pathetic six months later as he hangs upon a cross bruised and bloodied, but He could have avoided that since he is the Glorious God of the universe.

So why would Jesus put up with a horrible death if he was so glorious and so mighty? But look on in our lesson and we will find the answer. Look will you who we see talking to

Jesus. That's right, Moses and Elijah. They were speaking to Jesus about his "departure." I know that's how your NIV Bible translates it but literally the word means "exodus." I like that word so much better because it describes what Jesus had come to do. Just as God had used Moses to lead the Israelites out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt in the first exodus, God the Father was going to use Jesus to lead the world out of the bondage of sin in the second, more important exodus.

How was Jesus going to accomplish this exodus? Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about that too. They reviewed the many prophecies that made it clear it was God's plan for the savior to suffer and die and then three days later come back to life. Why exactly did Jesus have to die. Let me give you a simple everyday illustration. You can go to a store today and buy things without paying for them, right? Sure, that's what those things you call "credit cards" allow you to do. But paying for something with a credit card doesn't mean you're getting it for free. Some time later you'll have to pay the bill with real money. If you don't, the credit card company will come after you. In Bible times if you didn't pay your debts, you were thrown into prison. God is like a credit card company. Whenever we sin we wrack up charges on our spiritual credit card. Eventually payment needs to be made for these sins. God doesn't just negotiate a settlement where only partial payment is allowed. He doesn't allow us to declare bankruptcy, and start again. Rather, God demands full payment for what is owed. The thing is, you and I could never make the payment since every sin is only payable with an eternity in hell. That's where Jesus comes in. He made the payment for us when he suffered and died on the cross. He was able to pay for the whole world's sin because he wasn't just human; he was in fact the Son of God – as the Transfiguration revealed.

Jesus is not some contingency plan that God threw in at the last minute when everything else He tried failed. Through this incident we learn that Jesus is the culmination of everything God had been doing for thousands of years. Everything before Jesus including the O. T. law and prophets pointed to Jesus. All too often people suppose that those living in the Old Testament had a different way of salvation than we have today. It is true, they did not have nearly so clear a picture of God's plan of salvation as we have today, but they staked their hope of heaven on Jesus Christ, the Messiah who was to come. Abraham was saved through faith, and so was Moses and Elijah and Isaiah and all who ever were saved. The whole Jewish system of blood and the sacrifice of animals pointed to Christ, the lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Says the apostle Peter concerning Christ, "To Him all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the forgiveness of sins." Jesus is not something new on the scene. He is the continuation of God's work that is recorded through what we call the Old Testament.

That is really important for us to know, because we have to realize that God isn't just some big powerful being muddling along by trial and error until He finally gets it right. God is completely in control, completely faithful to accomplish everything He wants to do. He has a plan.

However, like Jesus, you and I will not enter heaven without first going through many crosses here on earth - the cross before the glory. Simon Peter knew that to be true. He helped baptize three thousand souls on Pentecost. He was able to heal a cripple, and even raise a dead person. But his life wasn't easy street. He was put in prison a number of times for speaking about Jesus and was finally crucified upside down before he entered glory. But Peter would tell you, it was all worth it. So hang in there. You may be struggling to make ends meet financially. You may have lost your spouse, and feel so alone. You may have health problems which make life

difficult to handle. You may have family issues. You may be ready to go to heaven now and be reunited with loved ones but for some reason, you're still here. When you are having one of those poor me days, think about the Transfiguration. It won't make your journey to heaven any shorter or easier but when you see Jesus glorified on that sacred mountain, and Elijah and Moses gleaming too you'll be encouraged because you'll be reminded that glory is coming! The final victory is ours. We shall overcome.

After this conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah concerning his coming death, these two great figures of the Old Testament started to leave. It was then that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good to be here; let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Here Peter seems to place all three on the same level as if they were equal. He wants a little cabin built for each of the three. Moses was a faithful servant of God. Elijah was a bold witness for the truth. But Jesus was far above either. An immense distance separated Christ from these mighty men of God, and a great gulf separates Christ from all teachers and whom God has given to men. Christ was the Savior to whom Moses and Elijah were pointing. Moses and Elijah were great men in their day, but still they were far below Christ. He was the true Sun; they were as moons bearing reflected glory. He was the truth; they were but witnesses of the truth. He was the Kings Son, they were but servants. Jesus Christ stands alone.

Now in some respects we are very much like Peter. He said, "Master it is good that we are here. Peter would have liked to have stayed on that mountain top, and he would like to have kept Jesus there even though there was much work to be done in the world. He felt that it was much better to be thus carried, as it were, into a sort of third heaven than it was to be traveling to the cross. In other words, it was sort of an escape from the hard realities of life. All of us are tempted to avoid unpleasant duties and shrink from rough work, but it is not good to withdraw ourselves from life as it is. We all have unpleasant tasks to face, unwelcome situations to meet, rough work to do. And the thing for us to do is to follow the example of Jesus, to set our faces as flint and march toward our crosses, which are but tiny splinters of the cross that He bore.

And now we read in our text, "And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone." Moses and Elijah had vanished. Peter had desired to keep them with Jesus, but that could not be. Their glory was to be swallowed up in Christ's. They came, they disappeared; Jesus remained and remains to this day. When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone."

Today you hear my voice, but my voice will be silenced in the grave even as the voices of those countless servants of the Lord who have come and gone before me. But the voice of Jesus will never be silenced. His voice was heard at creation when all things were made by the Word of His power. His voice was heard during the days of His ministry when He said to sinners, Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." His voice was heard as he hung dying on the cross, saying, It is finished. His voice will be heard on Judgment day, saying to the unbeliever, Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. His voice will be heard saying to the believer, Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. His voice will be heard forever in paradise as He opens to us new realms of thought and learning, of beauty and wisdom. So no matter how difficult life may become, Christian, remember who is in charge. It's Jesus. Remember, who he is. The All Powerful Son of God! A face shining like the sun, clothes whiter than you can bleach them. This is the person who is in your corner through thick and thin. This is the person who empowers us to face the challenges of life. Yes, It is good to be here Jesus, with you. Amen.