

**Matthew 17:1-9 – Change and Decay**

In the movie *Trip to Bountiful* Geraldine Page offers us a heroine who wants to go home once more before she dies. But there is no home to go to. Things are never as they look and they never stay the same. You can never go home. The home of your memories is replaced by ever changing reality of this moment. So at class reunions we find the handsome athletes of our memory are old and fat like the cheerleaders. Time is a trickster. All of a sudden you wake up and find you are not the person you were. Change and decay all around—that's how we sing of it in the hymn, *Abide with Me*.

Jesus' transfiguration is the surprise of a glory hidden in flesh and blood. His unchanging glory is not alien to His humility but is right there in that humility—amid the change and decay of a world out of step with its Creator. According to the witnesses, Jesus' face shown like the sun. This was not some new or different glory, but His unchanging glory hidden in His humility, in His flesh and blood.

Beside Him stood Moses and Elijah—not as some equal giants standing together as gods like Olympus but to point to Jesus whose glory is greater than all—not the radiance of a face but the glory of love come to save us sinners from our guilt, shame and death. His glory revealed here to His disciples is revealed for all the world on the cross where love dies for us. Not different glory but the same. The glory of love that saves.

From nowhere comes the voice: **"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him."** Eyes see what is seen; faith sees what is unseen. Christ the fulfillment of the long-promised Savior who keeps the Law of Moses and fulfills all the prophetic Word. Ears hear what can be heard; faith hears and trusts this as the living voice of God. But He does not address His fallen world to condemn or judge it but with love and redemption. This is Jesus' glory then ... and now. The love that seeks and saves sinners.

Jesus glory is His humility. *"Veiled in flesh the godhead see,"* we sang on Christmas Eve. Now the veil is lifted, here for a moment on this mountain and then again on the mountain of Calvary in the cross. Twin peaks of Jesus' glory are Transfiguration and Calvary. The glory of the One who kept the Law perfectly and who fulfilled all the prophetic Word is the very same glory revealed in the suffering that redeems us sinners and gives life to the dying.

Jesus' glory bridges the change and decay that bind us. We cannot go home. We cannot go back. Not to yesterday and not to Eden. The path lies forward, not backward, and Jesus is that path. He embraces the change and decay of our mortal lives even to death on the cross so that we have a new future of life and salvation by His blood. Jesus does not turn back the clock but moves it forward to the salvation planned for us before time began.

Tadpoles do not become frogs. The frog is hidden in the tadpole all along. It seems a strange analogy, but Jesus is no different on the cross than in the glory of His transfiguration. He is the same. He is the glory of the Father and our glory. Though hidden in flesh and suffering, Jesus is God's Son and Savior.

There is a part of us that believes that the answer to life lies in the past. If only we could go home again. If only we could return to a pristine moment when life was easier, purer, simpler, kinder. Faith has become for some a hopeful means to find the way back. Even the disciples wanted to stay on the mountain, setting up camp to avoid the harsh realities of life. But there is no glory for us there. Jesus says no; you cannot stay. The glory does not lie in the recovery of the past or sustaining the refuge of a moment. The glory is ahead.

Jesus must go down the mountain. The disciples must go down the mountain. We must go down the mountain. But the glory goes with us. Because Jesus is that glory, the embodiment of the love of the Father for us. Jesus showed the glory of this love in the suffering and death that gives life to the world. The disciples saw the greater glory of His promise in the Gospel

**they proclaimed to forgive the sinner and give life to the dying. We share in this greater glory, the Word of the Lord spoken through us to those still captive to change and decay.**

**Our temptation is to confuse this glory with a better, easier life. But God's glory is hidden in our weakness and sinfulness. Christ is not aloof from the struggles of this mortal life. His glory is hidden right here because He is with us. Lo, I am with you always. The reality is that life we have with Christ is hidden in a world of change and decay, confusion and conflict, suffering and struggle. It is hidden in the flesh and blood of sinners who have died with Christ in baptism and who live in Him the new life from this vantage point now and in heaven eternally.**

**The form of this life is passing away and only the glory of God will remain. The gift of God given to us in our own flesh and blood to save us. The future God has prepared for us in Him.**

**In the earlier mentioned movie, Geraldine Page's character finds the glory of the past gone. The prison of her life lived for the past is left behind and she drives off with her son and daughter-in-law to embrace the tomorrow God has prepared. The disciples thought the moment on the mountain was the greatest glory they would ever see. Only later would they realize it was but a prelude of the greater glory of the cross and resurrection. You and I are also tempted to think that glory is incompatible with suffering, struggle, and service. Where Christ is, there is the glory of God. Hidden in the sufferings and struggles of faith and life, Christ stands with us, that we might endure and be kept holy and blameless at the day of judgement. Assured of this glory, we go down the mountain, to live our baptismal lives in service to God and to our neighbor ... until all is transfigured into the eternal lives of Christ's promise in heaven forevermore.**