

“Moment of Truth”

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9; 2 Peter 1:16-21

Graphics: mountains, climbing, peak marker

Big Truth: The Transfiguration of Jesus is not the destination, but the launchpad for your life. Believing who Jesus is, fully, is the moment of truth in every believers' life. When you reach the mountain top with Jesus, and He reveals himself to you, you're called to get up and go down the mountain to serve Him with fresh encounters with the Holy. Believe, pray, read scripture, worship, and engage in spiritual disciplines. Those are the moments of truth in your life.

Focus Phrase: The Holy Spirit confirms my faith through every moment of truth with Jesus.

1. Introduction

- A. **Pray! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- B. Have you ever had a life experience that was so profound - so memorable - that it changed you? Changed your outlook? Changed your future?
- C. I think we can all admit that we have, to some degree. Those experiences can be negative and you come away with pain, even though you learned some valuable lessons. Other times, they're really good, like a wedding, a new baby, or an encounter with God in worship or in prayer. Maybe you're recalling that moment right now. Keep that in your mind.
- D. One of the most amazing, powerful moments in the life of the disciples of Jesus Christ came one day high on a remote mountain in Israel. So amazing was the event that it's included in Matthew's, Mark's, AND Luke's gospel. On an ordinary hiking trip up a mountain with Jesus, what they experienced next was the stuff only God can do!
- E. For the church, it's called the Transfiguration of Jesus. And today is day in the Christian calendar when we celebrate this event in Jesus' ministry and the lives of the disciples. It's the Sunday just prior to Lent, which begins this week on Ash Wednesday.
- F. Today, we can't help but put ourselves in the place of Peter, James, and John as their faith was powerfully confirmed as they saw, heard, worshiped, and then went back down the mountain to lead others to Jesus.
- G. Let's just soak this in as we begin this morning...be transported to that place with your fellow disciples...and see, hear, and worship in this moment.
- H. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 17...starting in verse 1. I'll read this a little more slowly and deliberately than I usually do...

2. Scripture

A. **READ Matthew 17:1-9**

- i. Now, I've been on many hikes in my day. It's one of my absolute favorite things to do, actually. It can seem a little pointless, though. You walk on a

trail, with no real agenda or purpose, other than to reach a vista or something, only to, then, end up back at the same spot where you started. But I love it!

- ii. One of my favorite ways to hike is to **climb mountains**. If I can't hike up a mountain, I've been known to drive or take a tram. I've been up Mount Washington in NH multiple times, and been to the top of Pike's Peak in CO twice. I drove up those.
- iii. I've hiked up some great peaks in the ADK, including Mount Marcy, which is the highest peak in the ADK.
- iv. No matter how I got to the peak, the one thing I always do when I get to the top of a mountain is to find and TOUCH the circular USGS marker that signifies the peak...the highest elevation marker. And on that marker is usually printed the coordinates and the elevation, along with a point in the center that is the actually peak.
- v. Touching that marker is, for me, the moment of truth...that I actually climbed that mountain. It changes me every time.
- vi. When the disciples went to the top of that mountain with Jesus, they found something far greater than a USGS elevation marker! **They had an encounter with the Transfigured Christ.**
- vii. And not only was Jesus there shining like the sun (!), but next to Jesus was Moses, who led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt 2,000 thousand years prior to this moment (what?!), and Elijah (wow!?), who was one of Israel's greatest prophets who lived hundreds of years before that day up on the mountain. But there they were!
- viii. What were they doing? Well, scripture tells us that they were just hanging out, talking with Jesus. "Hey. Hey. Whassup? Oh, ya know, just up here for a hike. Really? Nice, Jesus. Who are those guys? Oh, them? Those are my buds...they look a little freaked out, don't they? Maybe I should let them know this is all cool..." I'm SURE that's what they were talking about, right? Maybe not...probably talking about baseball...
- ix. But one of the disciples, Peter, was pumped UP! "Let's just stay here, Jesus! We can build some shelters for us...we can just live in this moment, Jesus!" This was amazing!
- x. But God had other plans. This wasn't about them setting up camp. This was a **moment of truth**, for them. We know that because a thick cloud descended on them. And God's voice, from the cloud, said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased; listen to Him!"

- xi. And instantly those 3 disciples fell over with fear! Literally, they were blown away by the powerful presence of Almighty God in their midst. And they were scared...overcome by fear, Matthew said.
- xii. Peter, James, and John had NO idea what was happening. If you and I were there, I bet we'd be in the same position: on the ground, cowering in fear, not sure if we should fight or flee!
- xiii. Yet, Jesus was WITH them. Moses was WITH them. Elijah was WITH them. Jesus simply touched them and said, "Get up and do not be afraid."
- xiv. It probably took them a moment to snap out of this fear. If you've ever been THAT scared, you know that the adrenaline dump your body feels is real... the shaking, the sweating, the heightened awareness of everything.
- xv. They had to come to the realization that this was not some whacked out dream or scary aberration.
- xvi. **God was doing a new thing!** And He chose to do that new thing right there in their midst. Jesus took them up that mountain that day for a very specific reason. Jesus was NOT surprised by what happened to him. He knew that Moses and Elijah would be there. He knew that the disciples would be scared and unsure of what was happening. God was doing a new thing!
- xvii. Actually, God was doing an OLD thing in a NEW WAY and this scene was confirmation of that.
- xviii. The whole point of the transfiguration of Jesus was a **coronation**. Jesus was King from the creation of the Universe. Yet, on THAT day on THAT mountain, God was retelling the story of His Son, King Jesus!
- xix. Jesus was being crowned King of the Universe - Messiah King - in their presence. If the disciples saw Jesus as just a rabbi and teacher prior to this, they knew, for sure, that Jesus was SO much more. He was the everlasting King over all creation!
- xx. This was, for them, and for us, a moment of truth! Jesus touched them on that mountain and that touch - and those visions and his words - transformed their hearts and their minds and their spirits.
- xxi. Matthew wrote that when Jesus touched them, they snapped to and saw only Jesus.
- xxii. Only. Jesus. (pause)
- xxiii. There's only One, church. His name is Jesus.
- xxiv. I think sometimes we lose sight of Jesus in the midst of our daily living. We lose sight of the supernatural. We lose sight of the promises and the hope. And THAT's why God graciously gives us moments of truth.

xxv. Yet, even then, we wonder if it's all true! And that's what the moments of truth are all about. Showing us that all the words about Jesus are true...and what scripture tells us can be trusted...that He IS who God says He is: the beloved Son of God whom we are to listen to.

xxvi. Peter later would write a letter to the church to help them get this point. And in that letter, he would recall that day up on that mountain. For Peter, it was a profound moment of truth!

xxvii. Turn with me to 2 Peter 1, starting in verse 16...

B. READ 2 Peter 1:16-21

- i. Peter may have been freaked out on the mountain of transfiguration, but he learned very quickly that it was a moment of truth for him. And he used that moment to confidently tell the church that Jesus IS who he SAYS he is. Jesus IS who the prophets foretold. Jesus IS the Messiah-King. He was confidently convinced of it!
- ii. The Holy Spirit confirmed it all to him and to all the others who had an encounter with Jesus.
- iii. When Peter, James, and John heard God say, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased," they knew that Jesus was so much more than they had imagined.
- iv. Peter wanted the church to know that they could have the courage to believe because there was one time - THE moment of truth for Peter - when it all made sense. It was not something that could be explained with human words or through human will. It was something they had to experience through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Application

- A. What about you?
- B. The world may say that believing in Jesus is foolish and that He isn't who the Father said He is. Yet, you're all here today because you've had at least SOME life-transforming experience with Jesus in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- C. We're all pretty smart people. We haven't been duped into believing a myth. You've been to the mountain at some point and I pray you KNOW this Jesus... our King!
- D. He wants to keep taking you to the mountain in the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants your faith to keep being renewed and increased and confirmed.
- E. Jesus wants you to be strong in your faith because there's a world out there - down the mountain - that needs to hear your confident testimony about what it was like on the mountain and what He's done in your life.

- F. The world needs to know what it looked like when Jesus was shining His light in a dark place in your life...and what happened when he touched you and assured you and gave you joy and peace.
- G. Here's something to write in your notes today: **The Holy Spirit confirms my faith through every moment of truth with Jesus.**
- H. Think back to that moment of truth you recalled to memory earlier. What was it about that moment that changed you?
- I. I have a sense that it was a feeling that life would never be the same. Or that you never want to experience that again. Or that you can't wait for the next time you're given the opportunity to go up the mountain for a moment of truth. God doesn't want you to have just one moment of truth...but wants to give you moments of truth on your faith journey.
- J. God is so gracious to come to us and offer us moments of truth, so that we will know Jesus loves us and is our salvation.
- K. And, the best part is that we can hike up that mountain whenever we want...we have a whole book filled with moments of truth from people just like you and me!
 - i. **Read the prophets.** Find Jesus in the pages of the OT. Every page has some hint of Jesus. Some pages directly point to Him. If you haven't ever thought about reading through the Bible in a year or two, today would be a great day to start.
 - ii. **Read the gospels.**
 - a. A couple month ago, we spent time in Advent and Christmas. That's a moment of truth for us. The birth story of Jesus, the angels in the sky over the shepherds, the big, bright star that guided the wise men...all moments of truth so that you would believe.
 - b. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River - another moment of truth. In fact, the very same words that the Father spoke about Jesus on Transfiguration Mountain were spoken when Jesus came up out of the water and the Spirit, like a dove, descended on Him. "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am pleased. Listen to Him."
 - c. The miracles of Jesus. The sermon on the Mount. The raising of Lazarus. The Resurrection! The Ascension! All true! All MOMENTS of TRUTH!
 - iii. For you. For me. For the church. All solid and immovable truths. To believe!
- L. Do you believe? Is God working on your heart and mind right now to convince you that there's more to life than what you thought there could be?

- M. See, because, experiencing moments of truth about Jesus is not about just realizing that there IS a Savior. This isn't an academic pursuit of this historical figure known as Jesus of Nazareth, as true as that is.
- N. Having moments of truth about Jesus is God's way of building you up to be so faithful that when you go down the mountain, you will testify so that others will have moments of truth as well.
- O. This is not something we do on our own, but ONLY in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. (pause)
- P. I know that some of you here today have had, or are having, a difficult season. There've been moments that have been discouraging. Maybe you're angry at God or someone or a situation. Maybe you're in a season of struggle over a decision. **God sees you. I see you.**
- Q. Know this: God is calling you, today, to a fresh encounter with Him so that He can help you and give you a new set of eyes. Your loving God has a moment of truth ready for you today.
- R. I know some here today are holding on to a past hurt or regret. Others are frustrated with a co-workers or family member. I know because we all share times of pain and confusion and those often keep us off the mountain...keep us away from the radiance of Jesus. Sometimes we don't want to go up that mountain because we know Jesus will be there.
- S. God is inviting you to a fresh encounter with Him on the mountain of transfiguration this morning.
- T. Be intentional about listening to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit this morning. Lay down your pride or anger or hurt for just a moment...and just see what He will do... simply take the hand of Jesus, as he reaches down and says, just to you, "Get up and don't be afraid."
- U. Jesus is the only One that can 100% make that statement to you because He is the only One who holds the Universe in His hands...including you.

4. Conclusion

- A. Today, this week, be intentional about seeking out a fresh encounter with Jesus so that He can show you a moment of truth.
- B. Climbing mountains can be fun and touching the summit makes you feel alive.
- C. Yet, nothing (NOTHING) can transform your life and your current situation other than Jesus Christ, the Messiah-King.
- D. He wants to show you who He is, that He loves you, and that He wants to give you a real vision of what He's doing in your life. And then wants YOU to radiate the radical love of God in the world, down the mountain.
- E. He ready and waiting. Get up and don't be afraid.

- F. As I pray this morning...and as we close our worship with song, let me invite you to not be afraid to come to the front so we can pray for you. Whatever it is - you can share if you want - God already knows everything about it.
- G. Our prayer team will be ready to pray over you. Let this be a moment of truth for you...
- H. Let's pray and then you're invited to come...
- I. PRAY!**