

Time for a Booster!

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³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

This Wednesday we start Lent with Ash Wednesday. Have you noticed that the Sunday before always has a Bible reading describing the transfiguration of Jesus Christ? Today is no different. Why? I can't find a passage in the Bible that says, "Thou shalt preach on transfiguration before Lent." In fact, God doesn't command the season of Lent. The Church decided to do this and I have no reason to stop it. But I see why they started doing this. Transfiguration acts like a "booster." You know what a booster is. It is something to give you a little more power or energy. Vaccines often need boosters. Rocket ships need booster engines to help them get out of the earth's atmosphere. Booster clubs give the team some extra support. There is a drink called "Boost" that is high in calories and protein to give you extra energy.

So the transfiguration of Jesus gives us this extra boost as we enter Lent. We need to see his glory as Lord shine before we see him beaten and whipped. We see Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus reminding us there is a heaven. We get to hear the Lord tell us Jesus is the one so listen to him. So today it is a time get a booster shot. Now, who needs it? We see first that Jesus' needed it.

I. Jesus needed a booster.

To help us get the most out of this text, we have to review a teaching in the Bible we call the humiliation of Jesus Christ. Think of it this way. The owner of a company wants to see how things are going in his company. So he dresses up as a common worker. He puts on a disguise. He goes to work like everyone else. He stands on the line doing the job like everyone else. He takes orders from the foremen like everyone else. Yet at any moment he could simply reveal that he is the boss and make the foreman obey him. He could step off the line and go back to his office.

That is what we have in our text. Jesus is God. He still had all of his godly power and glory. Yet for the thirty years or so he lived on earth, Jesus humiliated himself by not using all his godly power or glory. As God he is present everywhere, but in his state of humiliation he occupied space and had to walk. God never tires nor sleeps. Jesus got tired like humans, hungry like humans, he cried like us, he felt pain like us. As God Jesus is equal to the Father. As a human he was beneath the Father and needed him. We see that especially when he prayed. How many times did Jesus pray? Many. And he did the same in our text. ²⁸ **About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.** Jesus the man needed God's strength, God's Word, God's promises.

Look at what Jesus was facing. In a few months he will be in Jerusalem where he will suffer and die. But the torture of the cross is the least of his problems. On the cross he would suffer the anger of God the Father. God will make Jesus sin for us, then God will strike him instead of us. Jesus will actually suffer the punishment of hell for our sins. As God Jesus said, "Bring it on." As man, he said, "Give me the strength to do this."

And God the Father answered his prayer. ²⁹ **As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** ³⁰ **Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.** ³¹ **They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.** God first let Jesus' glory as God shine for a moment. And then Moses and Elijah joined him there. They talked about his "departure." In the Greek the word is exodus. They were talking about his upcoming death. But they didn't talk about death as a fact. They talked how Jesus will fulfill death. His death will fulfill or keep God's promise to save the world. His death would cause the forgiveness of our sins.

It is tax time. We naturally are looking for ways to pay the minimum tax so we look and put down any deduction we can. But Jesus wasn't looking for the bare minimum. He was looking for the maximum, all he could do to save the world from sin. So he prays to God for the strength to do it, and God gives him the strength.

But Jesus is not the only one who got a booster that day.

II. The disciples needed the booster of the transfiguration.

It is not going to be easy for Jesus disciples. Already Jesus' popularity was dropping fast; folks loved the miracles, but they were not interested in heaven. His enemies were growing in number and getting bolder. In a few months Jesus will go to Jerusalem, the very headquarters of his enemies. And Jesus made it clear. They will arrest him, torture him and kill him there. Of course, he also spoke of his resurrection, but the disciples didn't listen to that. They were too busy worrying about his suffering and death. Things are going to get tough for them.

So Jesus took three of them, Peter, James and John with him to the top of that mountain to give them a booster shot. ³² **Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.** ³³ **As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)** ³⁴ **While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.** ³⁵ **A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."** ³⁶ **When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.**

Though tired and almost asleep, they quickly became wide eyed when Jesus let his glory out. It was so wonderful that Peter became a little delirious. He offered to set up some shelters, but he didn't know what he was talking about. But we can understand his crazy talk. It was so wonderful there that he didn't want to come down. He wanted it to last forever. **"Master, it is good for us to be here."**

This little glimpse did help them. Peter never forgot it. He would write later, **We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'** **We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on that sacred mountain.** (1 Peter 1:16-18) This moment served John for the rest of his life. He would write, **We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only.**" (John 1:14). This glimpse of glory will get them past the crucifixion into his resurrection, past the persecution they will face as they went out to make disciples of all nations, this booster shot helped them all the way to death and heaven.

We have the Bible. We know it is God's Word. The Holy Spirit breathed into these human writers everything they wrote and thought. But they were not computers spitting out information. They were eyewitnesses. I could tell you how wonderful Hawaii is. But I was never there. Someone who has been there can tell you in much more glowing terms what it is like. Now Peter and John and James could really explain what it means to bask in the glory of the Lord.

The disciples got a booster from the Transfiguration. And so do we.

III. We need the transfiguration.

When Jesus calls us to be his disciples, it is more than saying we are Christians and we go to church. It means to follow him every step of the way. And it will not be a bed of roses or walking through a lazy valley. He leads us over one dangerous mountain after another. It will be hard because we still have a sinful nature. It is hard to talk like Jesus, to live like Jesus, to love like Jesus. And it will be hard to live in a sinful world. Like the disciples, I think we get demoralized once in a while. We are tired of fighting the devil, tired of resisting temptation. We are tired of trying to raise a family as god-fearing people in a society that tries to convince them not to be god-fearing. And we are tired of struggling, tired of pandemics, aches and pains, tired of burying loved ones, tired of waiting for Jesus. And like the disciples who almost fell asleep, we start becoming sleepy as we don't stay in God's Word or meditate on it.

Let the glory of Jesus today wake you up as it woke up Peter, James and John. See the glory of Jesus our Lord, the glory Moses and Elijah share, the glory we will share soon. Picture yourself standing next to Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Like Peter, let's conclude that it is good to be there. We are not in heaven yet, but we will because of Christ. His exodus, his death, fulfills it all. Your sins are forgiven because Jesus paid for them. It will be so good we will never want to come back here.

Transfiguration does that for us. But we need boosters besides transfiguration, and God's Word is a booster every time we read it, learn it and meditate on it. **Listen to him**, God said to us today. Listen to him. Peter, James and John marveled at all of this, but they still struggled. They resisted the idea of Jesus' departure and death to save us. His words of resurrection and glory didn't sink in yet. But they will. You and I may not get everything right away, but we will. So, listen to him. Hold onto his Word. Never let go of his promises. Let his Word provide the booster you need while we wait to see this glory. Amen.