

## **“Tell The Secret”**

Matthew 17:1-9; Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:16-21

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February 23, 2020

Let's begin with prayer...

I'm a fill-in today for Pastor Chan who is in Welsh for the full day. A disclaimer: I'm not trying to be the Pastor...just a fill in.

That reminds me of the time in my hometown of Selma, Alabama when First Presbyterian Church had a pulpit supply from Mobile come preach. The Church is downtown and at that time right across the street was the Hotel Albert, a historic hotel built before the civil war and a replica of Doge's Palace in Venice Italy.

Unfortunately it met with the wrecking ball to make way for a new city hall, library, and convention center. But back to the story.

So, the preacher from Mobile comes in the night before and checks in at the Hotel Albert. The next morning a few minutes before the service starts at 11 am...everyone is looking but no preacher. One of the elders is sent to the hotel and knocks on the preacher's room door. After a moment the door opens and it's obvious the preacher is in no shape to preach. He must have been practicing communion, with wine, not grape juice. . So the Elder runs back to the church and finds Mr. P.T. Shanks, who was a quite elderly Elder. He tells Mr. Shanks that the preacher is drunk and that he will need to preach. Mr. Shanks jumps like a bolt of lightning struck him, takes a couple of nitro glycerin tablets and makes his way to the pulpit. I don't remember what he said but I do remember it was the shortest sermon ever preached at 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian in Selma.

So I too will try to be brief... and while this message may not be memorable...at least I showed up sober.

Our New Testament lesson is from Matthew Chapter 17, verses 1-9. This scripture is about The Transfiguration of Jesus.

We have heard a moment ago from the Revised Standard Version in your pew bible.

I would like to read again the scripture from The Message, the modern day translation from the late Dr. Eugene Peterson. I always find The Message easier to understand and hope you do too.

Matthew 17: 1-9 – The Message

There was a magician who was hired to do his act on a cruise ship. He had been there for several years and did the same act over and over because the crowd was continually changing. He enjoyed the good life, spending most of his time out on the deck working on his tan rather than new tricks. One day the Captain bought a parrot and the parrot came with him every night to see the magic show. The bird learned all the tricks as to where everything was hidden by the magician in his act. The Parrot would say, "The card is up his left sleeve, the flower is under the pot, he hid the money under his shoe..." Because the parrot caught on fast, it was getting harder by the day for the magician to come up with new tricks. The magician really disliked the parrot for giving away all of his tricks, but since he was the Captain's, he couldn't just weigh the bird down and throw him overboard. Late one night suddenly the engine room exploded and the ship sank within minutes. Miraculously, the magician found himself clinging to a log. He was the only one left alive. As the sun came up in the morning, he turned around and here at the end of the log was that parrot. They just glared at each other and said nothing. This went on for three days. On the fourth day the parrot finally broke the silence and asked, "OK, I give up--what did you do with the ship?"

Magic, Mystery, trickery, we are all drawn to that aren't we? This mysterious event of Transfiguration in the life of Jesus Christ, wasn't at all any form of trickery.

The word 'transfigured' is a very interesting word. The Greek word is "*metamorpho*" and it means "to transform," literally, or figuratively, "to change." The word is a verb that means to change into another form. It also means **to change the outside to match the inside**. In the case of Jesus, his divine nature was veiled in human form and the transfiguration was a glimpse of the glory that he bore on the inside... being changed on the outside to match.

What is the Transfiguration about?

It was God's way of Teaching Peter and the other disciples that Jesus is glorified when we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. Jesus is glorified when the glory God puts inside of us is matched by what we show on the outside.

The transfiguration is a sign that Jesus was to fulfill the law and the prophets. It also assured James, Peter, and John, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

The site was most likely a mountain named Mt. Herman, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

Symbolically the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the law and the prophets. But God's voice from heaven "Listen to Him" clearly showed that the law and the prophets must give way to Jesus. **The one who is the new and living way is replacing the old.** He is the fulfillment of the law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, in his glorified form, they saw a preview of his coming as King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter those who witnessed the transfiguration bore witness to it to the other disciples and to countless millions down through the centuries. Chuck Swindoll in his book entitled "Jesus, The Greatest Life of All," suggests a fable where the angels must have wondered what God was thinking. Swindoll wrote "The plan for God to become man in the person of Jesus Christ had been ingenious. Only a human can represent humanity and bear the punishment they deserve, yet only God can overcome death. But to leave the responsibility of spreading the news in the hands of feeble, fickle humanity must have been baffling. What if Peter and James and John had grown weary and did not spread the message? Jesus had not made other plans. He is counting on them." ...and He is counting on us.

After Jesus led the three up the mountain...he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. Maybe as white as you get with Tide Power Pods or AAA Cleaners.

He took **three** because that was the number that could **legally** according to scripture **testify** to what they saw. Scripture states, "**For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.**" The three saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Moses had died and Elijah had left this world in a chariot of fire. Now they were talking with Jesus. Luke tells us they were discussing His coming death in Jerusalem.

Then Peter answered and said "**Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish let us make here three tabernacles... One for You, One for Moses, One for Elijah.**"

Like I am prone to do numerous times daily, Peter put his foot in his mouth once again. He should have kept quiet, but he couldn't resist saying something. He tried to place Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. And God rebukes Peter.

There are a lot of people today who talk without knowing what they are saying. Most are on social media.

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And suddenly a voice came out of the cloud saying: ***"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"***

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. ***"Get Up", he said, Don't Be Afraid."*** When they looked up they saw no one except Jesus.

When they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them... ***"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."***

I wondered why should they wait until the resurrection to tell others what took place on the mountain. Keeping silent would prevent the three from boasting about the closeness that they had been honored to share with Christ.

I also learned this is part of the gospel story. It tells who Jesus is. He is the Son of God. He has been tested for three years and at this time he is on the way to the cross to die for the sins of all women and men.

You see, God required a lamb without blemish and Christ was the only one who had never sinned and could die a substitute death for mankind. In his perfect humanity he was transfigured. The hope of the world just happens to be Jesus Christ. **He is our only hope.**

**So it is up to us to tell the story of Jesus .. To tell the secret.**

There are many things in our biblical teachings that we don't understand right away and maybe never will.

As we prepare to begin construction of our new shared church at MorganField maybe we can begin to understand the plan God has for us at First Presbyterian, Lake Charles.

Many of us have been frustrated by the slow process to sell the old building, to move in here with First Christian, wonder why they haven't sold their building. The Army Corps of Engineer permits, the high construction bids cost us another year of waiting, the loan application. But we are now ready to proceed.

The contract with Michael Dupin Construction is signed and depending on the weather ..we will get underway. Stay tuned for a church wide groundbreaking.

And here's a number to remember: 4590.....With the building permit came our new address: 4590 Corbina Road.

**Filled with expectation, we can now realize that God's plan is being revealed to us bit by bit.** One of my favorite church signs was at the Nazarene Church on Country Club Road. The sign said *"Make your Plans in Pencil and give God the eraser."*

May we all realize **it is time to "Tell The Secret" ... A secret no more. We will provide a welcoming new facility at MorganField.....A church home for today and future generations.**

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But most importantly we need to **"Tell The Secret" of Jesus Christ and how much he means to you, to me, and to the world.**

Amen.