

Matthew 17:1-8
Something Was Happening!
2.19.23 WRCoB

If you had the ability to witness one event
In the story of Jesus
Which one would it be?

Would you want to be there for the birth of Jesus
Standing alongside the shepherds
As they peered into that nativity scene?

Or how about when Jesus' parents scolded him
For hanging out too long at the temple?

Maybe you'd want to be there when
John baptized Jesus?

Or sitting with the crowd listening
As Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount?

How about the time when he stilled the storm
Or walked on water

Or when he healed the daughter of Jairus
Or brought Lazarus back to the dead?

Could you bear to watch his torture and crucifixion
Or experience the chaos of an empty tomb?

If you had to pick one

Which one?

R. C. Sproul, the great reformed theologian
In a sermon preached on this scripture
Said it would be this passage.

He picked this event because to him it clearly showed
Both the humanity and divinity of Jesus

It was a real, how should I say, God-moment.

It was especially impactful for the three disciples.

Well, actually, we don't really know
How James felt about the experience.

But we do know how Peter and John felt.

In John's Gospel, John begins by introducing Jesus

He writes, Jesus is the Word
Jesus is the life
Jesus is the light.

And then he writes

John 1:14 NIV

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

I imagine John reminiscing about the time on the mountain
As he wrote this introduction..

Peter too, writes about this event later on, in life.

2 Peter 1:16 NLT

¹⁶ For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his MAJESTIC SPLENDOR with our own eyes

Something was happening there on that mountain!

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In the Christian calendar

We have come to the end of the Season of Epiphany.

The Season is bookended between two events.

Epiphany Sunday on one end

And the Transfiguration Sunday on the other.

Epiphany Sunday, takes place on January 6

12 days after Christmas.

It is the Sunday the church recognizes

The Magi or Wisemen's visit to see Jesus.

The second, Transfiguration Sunday

The Sunday before the first Sunday of Lent

Observes the day

The three disciples witnessed Jesus' transfiguration.

The church considers both days as epiphanies.

An epiphany is an event that reveals something of God.

It happened on a day Jesus felt the need to pray.

As he often did, he went up on a mountain.

He asked his closest disciples
Peter, James, and John to join him.

It was there the disciples saw him transfigured.

His face was lit with a brilliant radiance
His clothes emanated a dazzling light.

Two men appeared along with Jesus.

They were Moses and Elijah.

And as Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were together
Peter suggests they camp out for awhile.

“It is good to be here.
Let’s build three tents to mark the occasion.”

But a voice from Heaven interjects, saying

“This is my beloved Son,
With whom I am well-pleased, listen to him.”

A cloud descends.

But as the disciples look up, the cloud lifts
Revealing no one but Jesus.

There are three places in the New Testament
The voice of God was audibly heard

The first time heard God speak
Was when John baptized Jesus

Matthew 3:17 “This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

The second time was here in this passage when God spoke.

⁵“This is my Son, the beloved; with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

Interesting!

The same words but with an additional imperative
“Listen to Him.”

And the third instance.

John 12:28b-29a NLT

Then a voice spoke from heaven, saying, “I have already brought glory to my name, and I will do so again.” ²⁹When the crowd heard the voice, some thought it was thunder

Now, I confess to never having audibly heard God speak.

But I believe it happens.

I have a good friend, a Baptist minister
Who said he was called into ministry
By the audible voice of God

And he is not a person that embellishes stories.

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Something was happening on that mountaintop.

A God-moment!

A moment when Christ's divinity was revealed.

The significance of which was to show his follower
The blending of humanity and divinity in Jesus.

The transfiguration experience confirmed
That Jesus was more than a kind and gentle soul
A profound teacher

Someone with a pocketful of home remedies
For the sick and ailing

He was and is an intentional expression of God.

God's beloved Son.

It was also an event with a message.

God intentionally included Moses and Elijah in the mix.

Moses represents the Law!

It was he who, in his own God-moment
Face full of radiance,
Who received the 10 Commandments from Mt Sinai

God gave Moses the Law of the Covenant.

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Elijah was also there.

He is considered the greatest of prophets.

His role in the OT

Was to evaluate the people's obedience to God

And call for repentance or renewal

If they began to step out of line.

And since they were always stepping out of line

The prophets continually called them to repentance.

The two of them, Moses and Elijah

Symbolize God's Old Covenant

The Law and the Prophets!

The Law and Prophets make up the entire Old Testament.

But then this cloud descends.

The disciples fall to the ground, shaking in terror.

But when they got back up

Jesus, and Jesus alone remained.

The lesson here is not to be missed.

And their disappearance greatly signifies
The centrality of Jesus.

It is the transference of the New Covenant
Out of the Old Covenant.

Isaiah 43:19 NRSVue

**I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?**

From here on out, instead of strictly following
The Law and the Prophets

God declares, "Listen to Him!"

Jesus becomes the center of our faith.

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To the eyewitnesses it was a defining moment

It was a God-moment, an epiphany

Something that happen then that continues to happen now.

How do we know a God-moment?

For me, tears are a clear indication
Of the close presence of God.

Not tears of sadness.

The moment is filled with the presence of God
And there is no other way to express it but to cry.

Frederick Buechner says much the same.

*You can never be sure. But of this you can be sure.
Whenever you find tears in your eyes, especially unexpected
tears, it is well to pay the closest attention.*

*They are not only telling you something about the secret of
who you are, but more often than not God is speaking to you
through them of the mystery of where you have come from
and is summoning you to where, if your soul is to be saved,
you should go to next.*

Unexpected tears are an indicator that God is near.

Another indicator of a God-moment

Is the tingling on the back of your neck
When music hits you a certain way.

It can be in the words you are hearing
Or the way the music is moving.

Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*
Or Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*

Or my favorite hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*
Or the spiritual *Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus*.

When harmonies and chords blend
I get that chill down my spine
An indicator of God's closeness.

Or the feeling you get
When you're laying on your back in a meadow

On a moonless, starlit night.

The feeling of the awesomeness of space
And of the insignificance of humankind

Psalm 8:3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you have established; ⁴ What are human beings that you are mindful of them. Mortals that you care for them? ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God.

In these moments, something is happening.

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Something is happening in Wilmore, Kentucky.

This past February 8 at the Methodist college, Asbury
Students gathered for their biweekly chapel.

They sang together
They prayed together
They listened to a sermon.

Worship has continued nonstop since
With thousands of students in attendance
From as far away as the Philipines

Asbury University President Kevin Brown says
“This has been an extraordinary time for us.”

“We’ve been here in Hughes Auditorium for over a hundred hours — praying, crying, worshipping and uniting — because of Love” (Alexandra Presta, editor of Asbury Collegian).

Something is happening in Wlimore Kentucky.

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Something happened on that mountaintop
With Jesus and his disciples long, long ago.

Something continues happening today.

Be aware of God in our midst.

Your God-moment not be so bold as the Transfiguration
Or like what is happening at Asbury University.

But God continues to make God's presence known.

Who knows, but that something is happening here at wrcob.

Let us pay closer attention to God in our midst
Through prayer, song, worship and service

To God be the glory!