

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Greater than Moses.*"

On Sunday mornings we find ourselves back in Luke's Gospel, which we're going through verse-by-verse. We're at **Luke 9:31**, in the middle of the Transfiguration. Since we haven't looked at this passage for a few weeks, let's back up to **verse 28** to get the context...

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (or death), which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Verse 30 says they were talking to Jesus, and in **verse 31** we find out what they were talking about: **his departure**. This means His **departure** from the world, or His death, which is how it's translated in some bibles. The context is Jesus told the disciples in **verse 22** that He would die. Then He's transfigured and has a conversation with Moses and Elijah about his death.

If I ask you about the men in Scripture who had the oddest – or most unique – departures from this life, who comes to mind?

1. Enoch – God took him to heaven.
2. Moses – God took him and buried him somewhere.
3. Elijah – God took him up to heaven in a whirlwind.

So Elijah and Moses had very interesting departures from this life, and they're talking to Jesus about His departure from this life.

This is a fitting topic of conversation for them, b/c – as we talked about in a previous sermon – Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets, and the law and the prophets prophesied of Christ's death. So the Law and the Prophets are talking about Jesus' death here, which is what they talked about throughout the OT.

Here's something interesting about The Transfiguration...

We look at this – and b/c Christ is glorified – our minds probably go to times Jesus seems glorified to us:

- His Second Coming...
- Him ruling and reigning during the Millennium...
- Him in heaven at the right hand of God...

But they were talking about His death, and it's actually a theme in Scripture to discuss Jesus being glorified in His death:

- **John 12:23** Jesus [said], "**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**" Referring to His crucifixion.
- **John 13:31** When [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, "**Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.**"

- **John 17:1** When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

So it’s actually a theme for Jesus’ death to be associated with glory, which is why it’s fitting for Jesus to be glorified while talking to them about His death.

Take a look at **verse 32**...

32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

This is arguably the most dramatic thing to see in all of history, and these three were asleep! Reminds me of another time Jesus took just these three and they fell asleep again: at the Garden of Gethsemane.

But they woke up, saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in their glorified bodies, and Peter couldn’t help but speak. Look at **verse 33**...

33 And as the men (Moses and Elijah) were parting from him (Jesus), Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

Peter was caught up in the moment:

- He’s mesmerized by what’s taking place...
- He doesn’t know what he’s saying...

But he decides he’s going to say something!

In the past I’ve heard people say that:

- Peter was trying to set up 3 altars, one for each of them, so they could offer sacrifices to them...which makes him look like an idolater.
- Or I’ve heard people say that Peter was wrong b/c he put Elijah and Moses on par with Jesus.

But that’s not really what’s happening.

We covered the Feast of Tabernacles last week, which gives you the background to understand what he was saying...

Peter wanted to set up **tents** – or other translations say booths or shelters – b/c he connected this to the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. Remember, it did two things:

1. First, it looked back on Israel’s time in the wilderness when Jesus spiritually dwelt with Israel through the types and shadows.
2. Second, it looked forward to when Jesus physically dwells – or tabernacles – among His people during the Millennium.

And so Peter thought this was the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. He thought the Millennium was starting; *“This is it. The Kingdom – or Millennium – is upon us! Jesus is physically establishing His Kingdom on the earth.”*

And if you look back at **verse 27**, what did Jesus say right before this?

I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

Jesus meant they would get a glimpse – or window – into the Millennial Kingdom – which they did by witnessing these three in their glorified bodies – but Peter thought it was being physically set up at this moment for good!

If you look at the beginning of **verse 33** it says **And as the men were parting from him**, this means as Moses and Elijah were about to leave from Christ, which is how it’s translated in some Bibles:

- Peter wanted this wonderful moment to continue.
- He says, *“Let’s make tents so you can stay here permanently!”*

We get a lot of different sayings from Scripture, and I’m not sure if this account is where we get the saying “a mountaintop experience,” but this was a mountaintop experience – they were on a mountain, it was wonderful – and Peter didn’t want it to stop.

But it had to stop. Jesus couldn’t stay here in His glorified body. And why’s that?

- If you look back at **verse 22**, Jesus said, **“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”**
- He couldn’t remain on this mountain.
- This was a look into the kingdom, but for the kingdom to come, Jesus first had to go to the cross.
- He came to die, and that’s what He still had to do!

You could say it like this, “Jesus had to come off this mountain and go into the valley of death below.”

And this is the second time in a few short verses that Peter made this mistake of looking at this physically instead spiritually...

Right after Jesus said He would be killed in **verse 22**, what did Peter do?

Listen to these verses from Matthew’s account...

Matt 16:22 Peter took [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Peter had an earthly perspective instead of a spiritual perspective, and this reveals a lesson we can learn from...

LESSON 1: OBEY GOD'S WORD AND NOT HUMAN WISDOM.

Two times in a row, Peter spoke using earthly thinking versus heavenly wisdom:

- Sure it would seem wonderful for Jesus not to go the cross.
- Sure it would seem wonderful for them to stay on this mountain.

But Jesus told Peter He had to die.

If Peter listened to Jesus' words:

- He wouldn't have tried to stop Him from going to the cross.
- And He wouldn't have tried to keep them on the mountain.

The reason I mention this is Peter knew the Lord's words, but he rationalized things, and in doing so he reveals a common mistake we make in the Christian life...

We know God's Word...

- We listen to sermons...
- We read our Bibles...
- We attend Sunday School...
- We go to home fellowships...

So we develop a familiarity with Scripture.

But then we face situations and temptations and:

- Instead of applying God's Word.
- Instead of asking how Scripture would direct us

We apply human wisdom.

We have all these commands and principles from the Bible that we can apply, but then:

- We're pragmatic.
- We do what we think is best...which is usually what's easiest.
- We play out the different scenarios in our minds and try to choose the one that seems right.
- We justify not obeying for different reasons.

For example, we say:

- *I know the Bible says to love my wife unconditionally, but she's so difficult...I'm sure God understands!*
- *I know the Bible says to submit to my husband, but this was written 2,000 years ago...I'm sure God doesn't still expect that.*
- *I know the Bible says debt makes us slaves, but when I buy this with money I don't have it will make me feel free!*

- *I know the Bible says to do all things without complaining, but I was reading this article and the psychologist said it's so important that we vent ever once-in-a-while and get it out!*

We ask our friends what they think we should do, because we hope they might say something like:

- *Could this really be God's will for your life?*
- *Would God really have you do something THAT difficult?*
- *I know that's what the Bible says, but that probably doesn't apply to your situation.*

You can see the sad irony of all this...

- We've spent all this time learning the Bible...
- We have all this familiarity with it,

But then we ignore it when face temptations and tough situations.

The question we need to ask is:

- *What does the Bible say?*
- *I feel tempted, but what would God tell me to do instead?*
- *What principles have I learned from Scripture that can give me direction?*
- *How can I apply spiritual wisdom, instead of human, earthly wisdom... which is what Peter was doing.*

And look what happened as a result...

34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

This is the glory cloud, or Shekinah, which throughout the OT was symbolic of God the Father's presence:

- Think of the cloud that led Israel through the wilderness during the day...
- Think of the cloud that rested on Sinai, and then filled the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle, and the temple

So when you see the cloud here, you think of God the Father showing up.

He enveloped them in this cloud and brought Peter's speech to an end. Look at **verse 35**...

35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

The reason they didn't tell anyone is the parallel account in **Matt 17:9** says Jesus told them not to tell anyone. Luke simply gives the result of Jesus' command, that they didn't tell anyone.

Jesus told them not to tell anyone for the same reason He told them not to tell anyone He was the Messiah back in **verse 21**. Remember, most people, including even the disciples, didn't know what Jesus was going to do as the Messiah:

- They thought the Messiah would be a conquering king who would sit on a throne.
- They didn't know He was a suffering Servant who would hang on a cross.

As long as they didn't understand who the Messiah was, they couldn't talk to people about Him b/c it would increase the deception about who He was...they'd almost be unintentional false teachers!

Imagine if they said, *"We saw the Coming King glorified. He'll be on the throne of David any day now!"*

- How deceived would people feel when Jesus ended up being crucified?
- So this is why Jesus told them not to tell anyone!

Let me read an extra detail that's given in the parallel account in Matthew's Gospel...

Matt 17:5 [Peter] WAS STILL SPEAKING WHEN...a voice said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The words, **"he was still speaking,"** mean God started talking while Peter was still talking. He interrupted him, b/c Peter should've remained silent, and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: IF YOU CAN'T IMPROVE ON SILENCE, DON'T.

Before I comment on this lesson let me first say that as an extrovert, if I struggle, it's:

- Talking too much.
- Talking at the wrong time.
- Opening my mouth when I shouldn't.

I say that to let you know I definitely have this struggle!

Share about Lindstrands and contrast with my family and how my kids might struggle with this too. This family knew how to be silent.

With that said, have you ever met people who struggle with silence?

- If you're honest, maybe you recognize you're one of these people?
- If nobody is talking, it feels awkward so you want to break the silence so everyone feels comfortable?

Peter reminds me of this type of person!

He's famous for speaking when it was silent, and sometimes he improved on silence, and other times he didn't:

- For example, he spoke up a few verses earlier when he declared Jesus was the Christ. Jesus said, **"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."**

- Other times he should've remained silent...and this is one of those times.

When Jesus appears in His glorified form, you listen!

Peter starts off by saying, **“Master, it is good that we are here.”**

While this was true – since Jesus brought them w/ Him it was good that they were there – Peter still shouldn't have said anything...and we know that b/c God interrupted him.

- God didn't need Peter's assessment of the situation.
- I think one point we can take away is even if we say something that's true – or good – but it's not the time to say it, then it's a bad thing to say.

I suspect this lesson might not sound very spiritual - knowing when to talk or not talk doesn't seem like a moral or spiritual topic that should be in a sermon - but what determines morality and spirituality?

- The Bible!
- If the Bible commands or forbids something, then it's moral and spiritual,

And the Bible has a LOT to say about knowing when to speak, and knowing when to be silent:

- **Proverbs 10:19 He who holds his tongue is wise.**
- **Proverbs 11:12 A man of understanding holds his tongue.**
- **Proverbs 17:27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.**
- **Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.**
- And the NT verse: **Jam 1:19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;**

Since the Bible has a lot to say about speaking and listening, it's an important topic. There are times to speak, and there are times to listen, and in this account Peter showed us a time to listen.

And one of the main reasons Peter was supposed to listen relates to a famous prophecy in the Old Testament...

Deuteronomy is a collection of Moses' farewell speeches to the Israelites before they went into the Promised Land w/o him.

In **Deut 18** he prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like him and the people would listen to that prophet or else...

Deut 18:15 “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR...18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

So God says anyone who doesn't listen to this prophet is going to be held accountable, and the reason there's such strong language is this was looking forward to Jesus...and it's really important to listen to Jesus...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: JESUS IS THE PROPHET GREATER THAN MOSES.

It looks like God is saying, “**This is My Son. HE'S GREATER THAN PETER. LISTEN TO HIM INSTEAD OF PETER.**”

But that's not what God is saying. God is saying, “*This is My Son. HE'S GREATER THAN MOSES. Listen to Him.*”

If you write in your bible, in **verse 35** God said, “**This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!**” You can circle these words and write, “*Deut 18:15.*”

God's words at the Transfiguration are interesting to me, b/c – since this is the Transfiguration – I would expect God to say, “**This is my Son, my Chosen One; LOOK AT HIM!**”

This is one of the most VISUALLY amazing moments in all of history. I don't know if anything could rival seeing the glorified Lord.

But interestingly:

- There's not a focus on seeing.
- There's a focus on listening.

And the reason is, Jesus is the most important Person to hear:

- We have to listen to His voice above all others.
- His voice needs to be the greatest voice in our lives...
 - Greater than Moses...
 - Greater than Elijah...
 - Which is really to say even and greater than the Law and the Prophets:
 - This is what Jesus taught at The Sermon on the Mount.
 - “*You have heard it said...but I tell you.*”

My Moody Bible Commentary says “[*The Transfiguration*] presents the case for Jesus being the new Moses, the new leader of God's people.”

- Moses was a great prophet, but Jesus is a greater Prophet.
- Moses was a wonderful leader of God's people, but Jesus is a greater leader of God's people.

I've told you before that much of what took place in the OT prefigures the NT, and Moses' time on Sinai prefigured the Transfiguration. Here are the parallels:

- Obviously Moses is present in both accounts.
- In both accounts there are three associates:
 - In **Exo 24:9** Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu go w/ Moses.
 - In **Luke 9:33** Peter, James, and John go w/ Jesus.
- In both accounts you've got a mountain covered by the cloud: **Exo 24:15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain...** like Peter, James, and John were covered by the cloud.
- In both accounts God's voice rings out from heaven:
 - We already read what God said in this account.
 - I'm not going to read everything God said to Moses in Exodus, but the point is in both accounts you hear God's voice.
- The other interesting parallel between both accounts is they contain a transfiguration. When Moses went up on the mountain, he was transfigured too: **Exo 34:29 Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him...35 the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.**

And there's one more clear connection between Moses and Jesus in this account...

Please look back at **verse 31**...

31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (or death), which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The word **departure** is literally exodus, which is how it's translated in some bibles. For example, the NLT says **And they were speaking about his exodus**

And this brings us to Lesson 4...

LESSON 4: JESUS PROVIDES A GREATER EXODUS THAN MOSES.

One commentary said, "[Verse 31 is] an important allusion to the central Old Testament event of salvation [which is the exodus from Egypt]. The comparison is made between Jesus' death and the [deliverance] of the nation of Israel under Moses."

You can't miss the imagery between Exodus and Christ. Just think back to the feasts we covered:

- It was Passover – the death of the Passover Lamb – that gave Israel victory over their enemy—Pharaoh.
- Jesus' death – as our Passover Lamb - gives us victory over our enemy—the devil.

- It was Passover – the death of the Passover Lamb – that freed Israel from their bondage and slavery in Egypt.
- Jesus’ death – as our Passover Lamb - freed us from the greater bondage and slavery to sin and death.

The point is this...

Moses provided a great exodus, but the exodus Jesus provided is infinitely greater!

Look back at **verse 31** one more time...

31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (or death), which he was about to ACCOMPLISH AT JERUSALEM.

We don’t usually think of death – especially not the death Jesus experienced – as an accomplishment. The word **accomplish** carries with it the imagery of victory or success, but Jesus went to Jerusalem, was betrayed, rejected, tortured, and crucified. His death looks like:

- A tragedy
- A calamity
- Something terrible

It looks like the opposite of an accomplishment.

But it’s perfectly fitting to call Jesus’ exodus from this life an accomplishment, b/c – aside from the Fall itself, which brought death to all men – there has never been another event in all history that accomplished so much. Jesus’ death:

- Accomplished the forgiveness of our sins
- Accomplished our salvation
- Defeated the devil
- Defeated sin and death

This victory – this deliverance – has been accomplished for us, but now we wait to enjoy all the benefits of it.

Let me close with a story that illustrates this...

There were two soldiers who bailed out of airplanes behind enemy lines, were captured, and put in prison camps. A high wire fence separated them, but they would still meet at the fence to talk. Unknown to the German guards, one of the men was part of a group that had a homemade radio that allowed them get news from the outside. The soldier on the side of the fence with the radio would take the news he learned and pass it along to his friend through the fence. One day the news came over the radio that the German High Command had surrendered and the war was over. This man took the news to his friend, and watched him disappear into his barracks. A moment later, a roar of celebration came from the barracks.

Life in the camp was transformed after that. Men walked around singing and shouting, waving at the guards, even laughing at the dogs. The German soldiers didn't know the news yet, b/c the Germans weren't as quick to announce it as the Americans. When the Germans finally heard the news three nights later, they fled into the dark, leaving the gates unlocked, and the soldiers were able to make their exodus from the camp. That is when they went free, but they rejoiced days earlier when they first heard the good news.

The same is true for us...

We have heard the Good News. We can rejoice, even though it will be a few days before we're free and the victory becomes clear to us.

We're like those men in the prison camp. We have great reason to rejoice. The war is over. Jesus has won.

If you have any questions about anything I've discussed this morning, Pastor Doug and I will be up front after service and we would consider it a privilege to be able to speak with you.

Let's pray.