

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*The Testimony of Two or Three Witnesses.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 9:28**. Two weeks ago we started looking at the Transfiguration. That sermon laid the foundation for the passage. Now we'll dig into it more deeply.

Look at **verse 28**...

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.

The Old and New Testaments both teach that matters need to be established by two or three witnesses.

- **Deut 19:15b Only on the evidence of two...or...three witnesses shall a charge be established.**
- Jesus confirmed this: **Matt 18:16 if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**
- Paul confirmed this: **2 Cor 13:1b Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

Something truly amazing was about to happen – Jesus was going to be Transfigured – and more than likely He brought these three along as witnesses.

This is the second of three times that Jesus took only these three with Him for something special...

- Previously, when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, **Luke 8:51** says **He allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James**. It would've been pretty amazing to witness this miracle, but He only allowed these three to see it.
- About a year later, only hours before Jesus' crucifixion, He only let these three join Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. **Mark 14:33 And HE TOOK WITH HIM PETER AND JAMES AND JOHN, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled**. This also would've been pretty amazing to witness the intimate moment between God the Father and God the Son, but again, He only allowed these three.

Why did they get to be part of some of the most dramatic moments in Jesus' life, but others didn't?

We aren't given an answer in Scripture, but it does teach something that brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS WAS CLOSER TO SOME THAN OTHERS.

Let me make a disclaimer as we begin this lesson...

This lesson is not an excuse to:

- Be unfriendly
- Be uninvolved in the body of Christ

- Not reach out to others
- Not serve others
- Leave right after service is over
- Avoid being hospitable...which I try to remind you every so often is actually a command and not a gift:
 - The spiritual gifts are listed in **1 Cor 12** and **Rom 12:6-8**.
 - **Rom 12:13** is outside these lists and it commands believers to **practice hospitality**.

So here's what you can't say: "Well, Pastor Scott said if I want to be like Jesus I only need three friends...and that's my spouse, my dog, and my cat."

With that said, I think it's significant that Jesus had tens of thousands of people following Him, but He chose 12 men to accompany Him during His ministry, and of those 12, there were 3 that He was closer to than the other 9.

There's even one verse in Scripture that seems to do two things:

1. It discourages lots of shallow relationships,
2. It encourages a few, deep, close relationships

Pro 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Let me read the verse one more time, but in the Amplified...

Pro 18:24 The man of *too many* friends [chosen indiscriminately] will be broken in pieces *and* come to ruin, But there is a [true, loving] friend who [is reliable and] sticks closer than a brother.

There are two ways to interpret this verse, and both interpretations could be true...

First, it could be saying people who only make lots of casual friendships – they have **many companions** – **may come to ruin** b/c they have a large number of fair weather friends who will let them down in difficult times. The true friends – **who stick closer than a brother** – will be there through thick and thin.

The other possibility is people who make friends too easily or **indiscriminately** do so to their own harm – or **ruin** – b/c they're showing a lack of discernment:

- Since people we're close to have the potential to influence us, wise people choose friends carefully. They end up with friends that are good influences and dependable.
- But unwise people build close relationships with anyone and everyone to their own detriment, b/c either:
 - Some of those friends negatively influence them
 - Or they're fair-weather friends who aren't available when a need arises.

So while it's good to be friendly, kind, and loving to everyone, it might also be good to have a few very close friends you can trust.

Jesus isn't the only Person in Scripture to model close relationships with people. Here are a few other godly examples:

- David's most famous friendship was with Jonathan, but he also seemed particularly close with:
 - Abiathar
 - Ahithophel
 - Nathan the prophet
- Elijah was part of a school of prophets – he might have known hundreds of different prophets – but he was closest with Elisha
- Paul seemed particularly close to:
 - Priscilla and Aquila
 - Timothy
 - Epaphroditus

So my point is, there are other Scriptural examples of godly people who were much closer to a select few.

Let me give you two simple encouragements we can draw from this...

First, our church has grown, and with our church's growth you can't be close with everyone:

- Trying to do so would not only be impossible, it would also be exhausting.
- And so I hope this lesson encourages you that you don't have to be close with everyone.

Second, there will be certain people you don't "hit it off" with – and while that's not an excuse to ever be unkind or unloving – you don't have to feel bad about this either:

- We're going to be more compatible with some than others, and that's okay.
- When we were in CA there was a neat Christian family that lived across the street from us. They were in our lives for about five years. They had us over one time and while there was no tension, there was also no connection. We left, and there were no hard feelings, but it was clear that they probably wouldn't have us over again, and we wouldn't have them over. We just weren't very compatible.

And while this lesson might make it sound like you don't have to try to be close to people, it's actually the opposite! What we're discussing is WHY you need to be involved in the body of Christ...

- Some people won't be compatible with others, but they'll be compatible with you.
- If you're not investing in others:
 - People are missing out on what you have to offer.
 - And you're missing out on what others offer.

So make intentional, relational decisions:

- Join a home fellowship if you haven't already...
- Spend time with people before and after service and other church events...

- Invite people to your home...

And see what close relationships God builds in your life.

And let me conclude this lesson by saying this...

What is the point of close friends?

We can look at Jesus' example:

- Share intimate moments of your life...
- Invest in others to help them grow...
- Allow them to invest in you to help you grow...
- Serve others and allow them to serve you.

When God does blesses us with close friends, we want to remember it's for more than social reasons:

- It's for spiritual reasons.
- It's for our spiritual growth and the furtherance of God's Kingdom.

Before we read the next verse, I want to remind you of an account in the OT that can illustrate what we're about to read...

When David became king, one of his first acts was bringing the ark into Jerusalem, his capital. It was a time of great celebration, and David seemed to feel particularly thankful. Listen to this verse...

2 Sam 6:14 David danced before the LORD with all his might. And DAVID WAS WEARING A LINEN EPHOD.

Linen ephods were the humble adornment of the priests, but...

- David didn't wear this b/c he wanted to be a priest.
- He wore it b/c it was the humblest garment he could put on.

Now here are two questions...

1. Was David king at this time?
 - a. He was!
 - b. He had all the rights and privileges that came along w/ being king.
2. BUT did He look like He was king?
 - a. No!
 - b. He was willing to take off his royal, kingly garments and appear in the humble apparel of the priests.
 - c. The linen ephod veiled David's typical majesty and glory as king.

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: THE TRANSFIGURATION IS WHEN JESUS TOOK OFF "THE LINEN EPHOD."

Hopefully you see the connection...

Jesus is like King David, but instead of wearing a linen ephod He wore humanity.

And the reason I share this illustration is I think it can give you a view of the Transfiguration that is accurate:

- We tend to think of the Transfiguration as Jesus **PUTTING ON** something: His glory.
- But it would be more appropriate to think of the Transfiguration as Jesus **TAKING OFF SOMETHING**: His humanity.

The Transfiguration is the one time during Jesus' earthly life that we get to see Him remove "the linen ephod" and look like the Kings and Lord of Lords.

With that understanding, look at **verse 29**...

29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

Listen to these two verses about Jesus:

- **1 Tim 6:16** says **He dwells in unapproachable light** and this refers to when He dwells in heaven:
 - It says **unapproachable** b/c we can't approach it in our earthly bodies; we need glorified bodies for it. This is why the disciples couldn't approach Jesus at this time.
 - Throughout Jesus' earthly life, this **unapproachable light** was hidden, but at the Transfiguration it was revealed.
- Listen to this amazing verse about what heaven will be like: **Rev 21:23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and ITS LAMP IS THE LAMB.** So in heaven, all the light is provided by the Son of God Himself! He is the **lamp!**

The Greek word for **dazzling white** is *exastrpto* (pr: ex-uh-strop-toe), and this is the only place it occurs in Scripture:

- It means, "*to send forth lightning*" or "*to flash out like lightning.*"
- This doesn't mean the light coming from Jesus was lightning, but it means the light coming from Him looked like lightning.

I mention this b/c it gives us an idea what it looked like.

If you write in your bible you can circle this verse and write, "Psa 104:1-2" which says...

Psa 104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD my God, you are very great!

YOU ARE CLOTHED WITH SPLENDOR AND MAJESTY,

2 COVERING YOURSELF WITH LIGHT AS WITH A GARMENT,

stretching out the heavens like a tent.

The Transfiguration is when we get to see Jesus clothed this way.

You might remember a few weeks ago we looked at some verses in **Dan 7**:

- God the Father was called the Ancient of Days
- God the Son was called the Son of Man

Let me share one of those verses with you that we read...

**Dan 7:9 the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.**

If you're familiar with Revelation, you know the first chapter contains one of the most amazing descriptions of the glorified Christ in all of Scripture. Here's just one verse...

Rev 1:14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,

Hopefully you notice the similarities: God the Son in His glorified form is described like God the Father or the Ancient of Days. Why is that? It can seem a little odd, but it shows that Jesus is God:

- It's an example of Jesus' words in **John 10:30** when He said, **"I and the Father are one."**
- **Heb 1:3** says **[Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God** (referring to God the Father) **and the exact imprint of his nature.**

So another way to look at the Transfiguration is this is the one moment in Jesus' earthly ministry when He most looked like God the Father.

Now let's look at **verse 30**...

30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah,

It's fitting for Moses and Elijah to appear with Jesus! These men basically go together. Let me explain why...

Malachi is the last book of the OT, and in the last chapter, Moses and Elijah are the two men mentioned in the last three verses...

Mal 4:4 "Remember the law of MY SERVANT MOSES, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

5 "Behold, I will send you ELIJAH THE PROPHET before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

It's significant to see these two mentioned in these verses, considering this is the last thing God said for 400 years...that's how long it was until John the Baptist came on the scene as the next spokesman for God.

There are a number of similarities between Moses and Elijah. I'm going to list the similarities, and I thought – for fun – you could try to blurt out some of the answers:

- They both parted waters:
 - Moses parted the Red Sea – Ex 14:27
 - Elijah parted the Jordan – 2 Kings 2:8
- Their lives ended strangely:
 - Moses was buried by God (Deut 34:6) and the devil disputed with Michael over his body (Jude 9)
 - Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind: **Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven** (2 Kings 2:11).
- They both met with God at Sinai: Moses – Ex 19, 24, and 34 and Elijah – 1 Kings 19
- They were both chased out of their countries by pagan rulers:
 - Moses by Pharaoh – Ex 12:31
 - Elijah by Jezebel – 1 Kings 19:3
- They were both miraculously fed and watered:
 - Moses by the manna (Ex 16) and water from the rock (Ex 17)
 - Elijah was fed by ravens and the brook that didn't dry up despite the drought – 1 Kings 17:2-4
- They both fasted forty days: Moses – Ex 34:28 and Elijah – 1 Kings 19:8
- They were both succeeded by close servants:
 - Moses was succeeded by Joshua – Deut 31
 - Elijah was succeeded by Elisha – 2 Kings 2
- Their successors both parted waters: Joshua and Elisha both parted the Jordan – Joshua 3:16 and Elisha 2 Kings 2:14.
- They represent all believers:
 - Moses represents believers who die and are buried
 - Elijah represents believers who are raptured – Moses – Jude 9, 2 Kings 2:11

Now for this morning's sermon, the most important thing to recognize about these men is their symbolism...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: MOSES REPRESENTS THE [ANY GUESSES?] AND ELIJAH THE [ANY GUESSES?].

The Law and the Prophets are the two great divisions of the Old Testament, and they're represented by these men.

Before the New Testament was written, the Old Testament was referred to as the Law and the Prophets...b/c there wasn't anything making it old. If you speak to Orthodox Jews today who don't embrace the New Testament, they still refer to the Old Testament as the Law and the Prophets.

You see this title used in Scripture. Here are a few examples:

- **Matt 7:12** [Jesus said,] “**So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.**” He meant treating others the way you want to be treated fulfills the OT.
- When Paul and Barnabas went into a synagogue in Antioch, **Acts 13:15** says **After the reading FROM THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS, the rulers of the synagogue [invited them to speak].**
- **Rom 3:21** **The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS bear witness to it.** Paul is explaining the Gospel, and he wants to make the point that it was contained in the OT.

Now if you understand the Law and the Prophets refer to the OT, let me ask you this...

What – or WHO – is the Law and the Prophets about? Jesus!

- **Luke 24:27** **Beginning with Moses (or the Law) and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF.** The Law and the Prophets – or the OT – is about Jesus.
- **Luke 24:44** [Jesus] said, “**Everything written about me IN THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE PROPHETS and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**”
- When Philip recognized Jesus was the Messiah, **John 1:45** says **Philip found Nathanael and said, “We have found him of whom MOSES IN THE LAW AND ALSO THE PROPHETS WROTE, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”** Philip understood the OT was about Jesus.

Now let me connect the dots...

- Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets...
- The Law and the Prophets is the OT...
- The OT is about Jesus, which is really to say the Law and the Prophets are about Jesus...

So when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, it’s like the Law and the Prophets appeared with Jesus testifying of who He is...and this brings us to Lesson 4...

LESSON 4: THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS ARE THE TWO WITNESSES THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH.

Katie and I were listening to a testimony from a Jewish man who converted to Christianity later in life. Here’s part of what he said: *“I believe that [Jesus] is the promised Messiah that we read about in Moses and the prophets. I can’t think of anything more Jewish than to believe in Him.”*

I’ve said a number of times before that we believe Jesus is the Messiah b/c He fulfilled the OT prophecies, which is really to say He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets:

- The Transfiguration is like a visible representation of all this!
- The Transfiguration is as though the sum of the Old Testament – or the Law and the Prophets or Moses and Elijah – are declaring Jesus is the Messiah.

Earlier I said every matter has to be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses:

- Peter, James, and John were the witnesses of the Transfiguration.
- Moses and Elijah were the witnesses that Jesus is the Messiah.

And could you really have greater witnesses than that?

And remember, the timing of the Transfiguration is HUGELY important...

Briefly look back at **Luke 9:22** 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.”**

It was going to look like the Law and the Prophets were NOT fulfilled!

But when Moses and Elijah appear, it’s like they declare “Everything we – the Law and the Prophets wrote – will be fulfilled:

- The Kingdom will be established...
- Jesus will be glorified...
- He will rule and reign...
- He will be King...

REGARDLESS of how it looks when He hangs on that cross!

Now one more note about this...

Remember the Transfiguration is connected to the Second Coming when Jesus physically establishes His Kingdom on the earth. Look back at **verse 26** to see the connection...

Luke 9:26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed WHEN HE COMES IN HIS GLORY and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

So the Transfiguration also looks forward to Christ’s Second Coming.

The reason I mention this is before Christ’s Second Coming, **Revelation 11** describes two witnesses who will be on the earth testifying. Listen to this description of them, and consider how much it sounds like Moses and Elijah...

Rev 11:5a And if anyone would harm [the two witnesses], fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes.

This is exactly what Elijah did in **2 Kin 1:9-14**...

Ahaziah was King of Israel and he sent three platoons of soldiers to arrest Elijah:

- When the first two platoons came, Elijah called down fire from heaven and burned them up.
- When the third group came – and I guess saw the charred ground – their leader acted differently toward Elijah and so Elijah didn’t burn them up.

6a They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying,

Who does this sound like? This is what Elijah did when Ahab was king.

6b and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

Who does this sound like? This is what Moses did when he unleashed the plagues on Egypt, especially mentioning turning water into blood.

And one more part...

7 And WHEN THEY HAVE FINISHED THEIR TESTIMONY, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,

This reveals what the two witnesses are doing...**when they have finished their testimony.** Testimony about what? Testimony that Jesus is the Messiah! They are telling the world prior to Christ's Second Coming that Jesus is the Christ and they need to repent before it's too late! They try to reach a Christ-rejecting world with the Gospel prior to Christ's return so they aren't all cast into hell.

So I hope this gives you a good understanding of why Moses and Elijah – or the Law and the prophets – appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration!

I would like to show you one more place in Scripture. Please turn to **Heb 10**...

Heb 10:28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

This is what it was like in the Old Testament under the Law of Moses. If you sinned deliberately you were killed. All it took was 2 or 3 witnesses to say you did it and that was it. Pretty serious, right?

Well the author of Hebrews is trying to make an even more sobering point. He's saying:

- This is how bad it was for people who rejected God's Law.
- How much worse do you think it's going to be for people who reject God's Son?

And that's not my opinion. Look at **verse 29**...

29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

And this brings us to Lesson 5...

LESSON 5: TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT AWAITS THOSE REJECTING THE WITNESSES' TESTIMONY.

Verse 29 says rejecting Christ is doing 3 things...

1. It's **trampling the Son of God underfoot** – trampling was sort of like the strongest OT way to show contempt for someone. The author of Hebrews is saying people who have received witnesses' testimony of Christ and then reject Him are showing this sort of contempt for Him!
2. When it says **blood of the covenant**, it's referring to Christ's blood, b/c Jesus' blood was used to institute the New Covenant. In **Matt 26:28** Jesus said, "**This is My blood of the New Covenant.**" To reject Christ is to **profane** His blood, or view it as common or meaningless.
3. It's also **insulting the Spirit of grace**. This is what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, or commit the unpardonable or unforgivable sin. It's rejecting the Holy Spirit's work in drawing us to Christ, or revealing that Jesus is the Messiah.

To prevent people from doing these things, the author of Hebrews gives a warning in **verse 30**...

30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I read these verses a little differently now:

- I used to read them and think about the two or three witnesses being anyone who preaches Christ to us.
- Now I read these verses and think about Moses and Elijah, or the Law and the Prophets:
 - We have the testimony of these two great witnesses that Jesus is the Christ.
 - When you have the entirety of the OT – or the Law and the Prophets – testifying that Jesus is the Messiah, how bad do you think it will be for people who reject that much revelation?

Because God is gracious and loving though, this isn't His desire:

- He didn't provide these witnesses of His Son to condemn us.
- He provided these witnesses of His Son so we would recognize He's the Messiah, embrace Him as Savior, and be forgiven for our sins.

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

Let's pray.