



Table Talk II

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • ILT Dean of Chapel

Transfiguration Sunday | January 21, 2024



MATTHEW 17:1-9

“When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.” Vs. 6

Those terrified disciples assumed a posture of worship—that is, they “fell on their faces” (vs. 6). The brightness of the cloud that enveloped them... the disembodied voice speaking out of the cloud as if it, too, enveloped them... the divine recognition of Jesus—their rabbi—as the beloved Son of God... the divine imperative, “Listen to him...!” all combined to instill an overwhelming fear in the hearts of Peter, James, and John... a fear that drove them to commit an act of worship—that is, they “fell on their faces.”

Jesus changes all of that. The very first words he speaks after his Father in heaven has commanded, “Listen to him,” radically change the direction of worship. Because of Jesus, his coming in the flesh, and his coming down to be with us, we no longer prostrate ourselves in fear before an incomprehensible and terrifying divinity. Rather, the divinity has come to us in the person of his Son, Jesus... a son who speaks kindly and gently to his people, “Rise, and have no fear.” When Jesus fills our eyes, as the eyes of Peter, James, and John were filled (cf. vs. 8), then there is nothing that will separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus (Ro. 8:39).

Perhaps we, as Christians, have lived with this so long that it ceases to be remarkable to us. The religions of the world (even Christianity is numbered among them) worship their god(s) out of fear and trembling or manipulation and greed. Without faith to see in Jesus Christ the radical reorientation of worship, Christian worship remains rooted in fear. But, when faith grasps hold of Christ’s command, “Have no fear,” then worship becomes that mighty arena in which our good God—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—hands out the gifts of Christ—the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—through Word and Sacrament.

Table Talk: Discuss the radical reorientation of worship in Jesus Christ.

Pray: Heavenly Father, lift up my fearful face which I hide from your sight and let my eyes see Jesus and Jesus only. Amen



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MATTHEW 17:1-9 ESV

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him. 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, Rise, and have no fear. 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.



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