

Transfiguration

based on Matthew 17:1–9

Narrator: After the enthusiastic days following Pentecost, Peter, James, and John finally took time to share some memories. The memory that was most on their mind was when they followed Jesus up a mountainside and experienced his divine glory.

James: We've been quiet about this for a long time, mainly because we didn't know what to think about it or what to do about it.

John: Jesus told us not to tell anybody, at least not then. But time has passed now, and what we've seen and heard might help people have more faith, now that Jesus has returned to the Father.

Peter: He is still with us, John—always, and in a more wonderful way than when everyone knew him as a teacher.

James: You're right about that, Peter. I'm still learning to think about Jesus in this new way—you know, seeing him as not just the teacher and miracle worker, but as the Lord. We'd get into a lot of trouble for calling him that, but we know it's true.

John: James, I think we all knew in our hearts that he was more than just a teacher, even before we went up that mountain with him.

James: I thought I knew it, but seeing what happened to him there lead me to believe at a whole new level.

Peter: Yeah, it did for all of us. That day, I thought it would be just another little retreat away from the crowds. It wasn't unusual for Jesus to take us off to a quiet place to rest and to pray or to talk about what was happening in our lives. But we climbed higher than usual, up to where the winds roar and could nearly blow us off the side of the mountain and into the valley below.

John: I was tired by the time we got to the top. I sort of collapsed, tried to catch my breath, and just sat there and looked out at the countryside.

James: I was digging around in our bags for something to eat. When Jesus' appearance began to change, I had a loaf of bread in my hands. It's unbelievable to think that while this divine thing was happening to my friend, I was worried about my stomach! Peter, you were standing right next to him.

Peter: At first I was just gazing across the rocky wilderness. Then I saw that he had become very calm and still. His eyes were closed and he seemed to be concentrating, the way he did sometimes when he was in prayer.

John: I know what you mean. He would get so focused and quiet. And his breathing would change a little. You saw it too, didn't you James?

James: All I know is that I looked up, and he was glowing. Glowing! Like an angel, or what I suppose an angel would look like. He got so bright I could barely see you, Peter.

Peter: To be honest, I wondered if my eyes were playing tricks on me. But then I saw the other two men standing there too. The two elders from another time, glowing beside him.

James: How did you know they were Moses and Elijah, Peter?

Peter: I didn't at first. But as they began to talk with Jesus, certain things they said stood out and reminded me of what I'd learned from the Scriptures.

John: I couldn't hear them that well from where I was standing. And I know this sounds strange, but I knew right away who they were. It was as if I was recognizing people I'd seen before. I just knew that I knew.

Peter: It was so overwhelming. The holiness in that place—all I could think was how we were in the presence of God's faithful servants, our forefathers, the ones who established our whole religion and way of life.

James: I wanted to run away. I mean, you don't just walk up to holiness and stand there—do you? When Peter suggested we build shelters for them, it seemed like the perfect thing to do.

John: And then that voice came and thundered over us, out of the cloud. "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

Peter: I may have passed out then—I don't remember the next few minutes.

James: I think we all did. The next thing I remember is that I was huddling on the ground with the two of you. The power of that voice. It seemed like it could have crushed us or could have burned us up in an instant.

John: But it was a gentle voice, even though it boomed. I can't think of that moment without breaking down. Our heavenly Father spoke to us. And Jesus walked over to us, helped us get up, and told us not to be afraid.

Peter: And Moses and Elijah were gone.

James: And that was that. Jesus told us not to say anything until after the Son of Man would be raised from the dead. I'm ashamed to say that even then I didn't understand what he meant by that—the raising from the dead part.

John: No worry, James, none of us understood until later.

Peter: But all of us believed, even without understanding. How can you not believe, deep down in your soul, when God has allowed you to hear his voice? †