Fear Not - The Transfiguration

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Well, it's good to be with you this evening.

As Michael mentioned, we're wrapping up our Fear Not series this evening. And I'd like to apologize in advance for my voice in case it goes out. I've lost my voice twice in the last week.
So I lost it starting Sunday night, came back, lost it again after Wednesday night with our students. So I'm going to preach as long as I can and hopefully it holds up. But it's a joy to open God's Word with you as it always is.
The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever. All of us have many unforgettable moments in our lives.
And if I asked you to come up and share with all of us, I'm sure that any of us could come up with a handful of moments in our lives that are just absolutely unforgettable.
[1:11] They're just etched into our memories. Some of them may be random. I have some random memories from my childhood that I don't really know why I remember, but they're there. But I've got a lot of others that I know exactly why they're there.

And you do too. You remember certain days or certain dates even, and it's very clear why you remember that moment. It was a moment of great joy, of great celebration and excitement or deep regret.
Profound sadness, pain, fear, anger. Any of these deep emotions cause things to stick in our minds. I've played a lot of very meaningful basketball games at Falls Creek. One of them stands out in particular because I tore my Achilles about two years ago. And I will always remember sitting there on the ground and my friend Garrett coming up to me, who's seen me get injured more than anyone should see their friend get injured.
But he said, what happened? I said, I just tore my Achilles. And he said, no, you didn't. And he reached down and felt it and he said, yeah, that's gone. I will always remember that moment.
[2:21] And as you think about the disciples of Christ, they would have had so many unforgettable moments. They spent three years with Jesus. Three years walking with him.

Three years being taught by him. Three years of witnessing him do the miraculous. How many memories would be burned into their minds of things Christ said and did.
We might get frustrated by the disciples sometimes because of their inability to recognize the significance of things that are taking place as Christ is teaching them or as Christ is performing miracles.
But there would have been so many things that they saw, that they understood immediately, and that they remembered for the rest of their lives.
Things like Jesus healing a lame man. Just telling him to get up and walk. And I can't imagine seeing those weak, skinny legs become instantaneously strong as he just gets up and walks home.
[3:31] Or Jesus reaching out and putting his hands on a leper. Something you didn't do. That was a communicable disease. And it was ceremonially unclean.

And this leper comes to Jesus and bows down. And Jesus reaches out his hand and touches him and heals him. A few years ago, I was on vacation with my wife's family.
And there's only one grandkid in the family at the time. Now there's ten. So there's just one. He was about one and a half. And we're kind of walking around the pool, seeing what all the place we're staying had for us.
And he's about one and a half. And he comes up and he's got something in his mouth. So we're like, what is he chewing on? What is that? And his mom runs up to him, digs it out. And it was a used band-aid. That's the reaction the disciples would have had to Jesus reaching out and touching

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a leper.
That visceral just, oh, what is happening? What is he doing? That would have been burned into their minds. But there's one encounter a few of his disciples would not have been able to forget.
[4:44] And it wasn't just unforgettable. It was life-changing. It's not an encounter with someone sick or demon-possessed. There's not even a miracle directly involved in this encounter.

As glorious as those other experiences were, what we'll see tonight is the most glorious and majestic encounter that anyone ever had with Jesus during his earthly life.
Tonight, we're looking at the transfiguration. Open with me to Matthew chapter 17. We'll be in Matthew chapter 17, verses 1 through 9.
There are two scene changes in this story, and so we'll let that outline our passage for us. So first, we see the trek up in verse 1. The trek up in verse 1.
Matthew chapter 17, verse 1 reads, And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
[5:56] There are very few things in the Gospels that are stamped by a time count. They're given how many days after certain things happen. Usually, it just kind of gives them to us one after another without telling us what the time relationship between the two events is.

So why here? Well, because of what Jesus just said back in chapter 16, verse 27. He's withdrawn to a Gentile region with his disciples, instructing them, pouring into them, before he heads back into Jerusalem to face a certain death.
And it's in these moments of instruction with just his disciples that he says, in chapter 16, verse 27, For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he's done.
So he's talking about his second coming. Verse 28, Truly I say to you, there are some standing here among the twelve who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.
Jesus predicted his glorious return to judge the world and then told his disciples, some of you here are going to see this.
[7:21] They won't see the full event. They won't see the full judgment poured out. But they will see the Christ of the judgment, the Christ of the second coming.

They'll see a preview of it. And so it's after these six days, Jesus is going to make this promise and fulfill it within the week. After just six days, he takes with him his inner circle of disciples.
Jesus didn't spend an equal amount of time with all of his disciples. This was his leadership team, so to speak, among the twelve. And it says he led them up a high mountain by themselves.
We don't know what mountain this is. Matthew intentionally leaves it out of the narrative. We do know that whatever Jesus had to tell them or whatever he had to show them would take place in complete privacy.
But as always, there are no throwaway details in the Bible. This isn't just a geographical detail that Matthew's throwing in there. He's not just stating what the topography of the area they were in was.
[8:32] Places and landmarks have theological significance in the Bible. When was the last time we saw Jesus on a mountain, delivering the Sermon on the Mount, explaining God's Word to the people gathered there?

We're expecting, as we go up this mountain with them, to receive revelation. And there are lots of significant events that take place on the tops of mountains in the Bible. You think of Moses.
This is the kind of place where he received the law. This is where God spoke to Moses. You think of Elijah, kind of a forerunner among the prophets. He also, on the same mountain, Mount Sinai, received revelation from the Lord.
That leads us secondly to the transfiguration. The transfiguration. We see this in verses 2 through 8.
That word transfigured is an odd word.
[9:40] We don't really use it. But it comes from the Greek word where we get our word for metamorphosis. Jesus was transformed. He was changed in their presence.

This exact word is only used a few places in the New Testament. Here, also in Mark 9, describing the transfiguration. And outside of that, the only other two occurrences are 2 Corinthians 3, where it says that we behold the glory of the Lord and are transformed.
We're transfigured from one degree of glory to another. The other place is Romans 12 too. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed.

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Be transfigured by the renewal of your mind. Jesus is transformed in front of them. I do appreciate that the ESV sticks with transfigured, because if we just say transformed, our question is, what is he transformed into?
And he's not transformed into anything. This is an unveiling. This is a revealing of who he truly is underneath his flesh. It's a brief display of his divine glory that he has possessed for all of eternity.
[10:59] And his face shines. His face gives off light like the sun. And it's important to notice that his face is not reflecting this light.

His face is not borrowing this light. This isn't a reflected glory. This isn't a shared glory. This is his glory through and through that's cracking through his flesh.
It's an unveiling. It's not a spotlight that's on him. It is an unveiling. His face is the source of this light. And so Hebrews 1.3, which we read earlier, rightly says, he, that is Christ, is the radiance of the glory of God.
Not the reflection. He's a source of God's glory. And when we think about God's glory, what is it? Well, it's usually associated with light in the Old Testament especially.
I think we can say something like it is a visible manifestation of his holiness. It's a visible manifestation of his holiness.
[12:15] Christ's glory here, which has been veiled by his flesh, is now uncovered in the presence of his disciples. And when we think about the glory of the Lord in the Old Testament, it's been called the Shekinah glory of Yahweh, the Shekinah glory of God.

It is always a bright, burning, shining display of his holiness. You think of Moses with the burning bush. The bush is burning.
It's bright. It's glorious. And yet it conveys holiness because Moses has to take off his shoes. You think also of where Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, there was what?
Fire and smoke. What is it that led the Israelites through the wilderness those 40 years? It was a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud. And now, in the time of the Gospels, what is the earthly display of God's bright glory?
Well, it's not a what. It's not a where. It's a who. Christ is the glory of Yahweh. Jesus is Yahweh and always has been.
[13:30] He is the visible display of God's invisible glory. And this isn't the first shiny or glowing face that we've seen in the Bible.

There's another one. Moses. He spoke with the Lord on the mountain face to face as someone speaks to a friend. And when he came down, his face was still glowing. His face was still shining.
He wasn't radiating this light. It was just the memory of a reflection of the presence of the Lord whom he had spoken to. But the glory on Christ's face is a light that will not go out.
It is a shining that will not fade away for all of eternity. This is the clearest demonstration of Christ's deity from his earthly life.
And speaking of Moses, verse 3, And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him. What? This is a wild part of this story.
[14:39] How did they get there? What are they doing there? Do they currently have bodies or are they just spirits? How does this happen? We have so many questions. This is so shocking.

Why does this happen and what does it mean? One of the things it means is that there is life after death. Moses and Elijah have departed this world but they are not dead.
They are alive in his presence. But a question we need to ask is why them in particular? As you think about the Old Testament saints, there are a lot of notable people that are left out of this group. Moses, we can make arguments for. He's probably the greatest leader in the history of the world. He was the greatest leader in Israelite history. He gave us the first five books of the Bible. He makes sense. But why not Adam or Abraham or David or Solomon or Isaiah?
There are so many other notable figures that are not listed here. So why these two? Well, the text doesn't outrightly tell us so we need to do our best to understand what these two men are doing here.
[15:49] I think we can arrive at a few things. One, they represent the law and the prophets. As the Jews thought about the Old Testament, the Old Testament fell largely into these two categories.

The law, first five books that Moses gave us, and the prophets. And what the prophets were doing, they certainly predicted the future, but one theologian has called them covenant enforcers or law enforcers.

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They are there to repeat God's word, enforce God's word, make it plain to the people. The law and the prophets now are here speaking with Christ.
And it's easy to imagine them saying, this is who we were talking about. This is the fulfillment of our hope. We didn't get to see it, but here he is right in front of us.
Another connection these men have are mountains. I've mentioned them already, but both of these men were on top of Mount Sinai speaking to the Lord and hearing from him. Moses went up to Mount Nebo where he died and was looking forward to what was promised, but he didn't get to enjoy the fulfillment of that promise.
[17:09] And it's there that he died. Elijah also had Mount Carmel where he showed down with the prophets of Baal and the Lord proved himself victorious.

another interesting thing that connects these two people thirdly is their deaths. Moses died, but it was under suspicious circumstances.
No one ever found his body. It says the Lord took him. And so we know he died, but he didn't have a burial place because the Lord took him. And Elijah really, he did not die. He was taken up to heaven on chariots of fire.
And so we have here a representation of saints who have died and saints who have not. And in this preview of the second coming of Christ, that's an accurate preview.
There will be those who are raised from the dead to meet the Lord and there will be those who are still alive on earth to meet him when he comes. And another interesting thing in prophecy that connects these two is Revelation chapter 11.
[18:12] Two witnesses that come to declare the Lord's word in the midst of the tribulation. They're not identified as Moses and Elijah, but they're doing Moses and Elijah type of stuff.

Shutting up the sky, sending plagues. There are two figures incredibly like these two men, Elijah and Moses. But they're talking with him at the end of verse 3 and what is it that they were discussing?
Well, Luke 9 actually tells us they were discussing his departure or literally his exodus. They're talking about him leaving this world and he's going to leave this world through sacrifice.
And the word exodus is literally used in Luke 9 31 and Moses also had a departure through sacrifice. They sacrificed the Passover lamb which immediately led to them leaving Egypt.
Jesus too will have a departure that comes through the sacrifice of his own flesh. what a glorious picture. Verse 4 and Peter said why Peter?
[19:22] Why? No one asked you. You are there to be quiet and to observe. And Peter said to Jesus Lord it's good that we're here.

If you wish I will make three tents here one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. Lacey and I are currently in an ongoing battle to teach our kids not to interrupt.
They will just come into a room already mid-sentence. We're like there's a conversation that's ongoing here into the room quietly watch and observe and evidently Peter was never taught this or at least forgot it in this moment.
and he almost promotes himself here. I see why you invited us now. It's good for us to be here. Thank you for inviting us. This is where we belong. And he's caught up in his own plans rather than what the Lord's will is. And I think Peter's well intentioned here in his offer.
[20:30] It's tough to tell but at the very least he's foolish to think that Christ is on par with Elijah and Moses. And maybe he's even so warped in his thinking in this moment that he's saying like Christ this is a huge honor for you to be in the presence of Moses and Elijah.

Let me help this moment last a little longer. And so Peter's kind of butting into this conversation like hey scoot together let me take a picture of you guys. Let's remember this.
Let's commemorate this moment. verse 5 he was still speaking. Goodness Peter read the room read the mountain.
But his volunteer application gets interrupted by God himself. 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. this is the presence of God the father speaking to this mountain full of witnesses and he describes his son in terms of Psalm 2.
[21:46] You are my son. Today I've begotten you. But he calls him his beloved son, his chosen son, his special son with whom I am well pleased.

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The son of my delight, the son of my pleasure. this is verbatim what the father spoke to the son at his baptism. This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased, which was the marker of his first coming.
He has arrived in full. And the father speaks it again here at this preview of his second coming. And he calls him his son. He is of equal status with the father and he says, listen to him.
All of you disciples, listen to him, especially you, Peter. Listen to what Jesus says. Whatever he tells you to do, you do it. There's a poem I read in high school that I loved.
It resonated with me immediately. It's called The Charge of the Light Brigade. Describing an infamous battle in British history where there was some miscommunication and misinformation and a brigade of British soldiers rode into essentially an ambush and they were outnumbered.
[23:09] And the soldiers obviously are figuring out there's been some misinformation, there's been a blunder as the poem calls it, but the author of the poem describes the soldier's responsibility in that moment this way.

Theirs is not to make reply. Theirs is not to reason why. Theirs is but to do and die. Their role is to listen and to obey.
And that's what they did. We need the same kind of obedience to Christ. Peter needs the same kind of obedience and submission to Christ.
And this listen to him is an addition from the baptism affirmation, but it's also something that Moses predicted. It's also something Moses commanded. In Deuteronomy 18.15 he says, the Lord will raise up a prophet like me from among you.
Listen to him. And the father is saying this is the prophet Moses was talking about. Be quick to listen to him. Be slow to speak back to him.
[24:19] And Peter's trying to do good things. He's trying to do something to serve Christ. But we don't just need activity for activity's sake. We need to hear the words of Jesus and do what he says.

Do you hear him? Do you obey him? The way we do that is through listening to the word that's already been spoken. We always run the risk of getting caught up in ministry and good activities and forgetting to listen to Christ.
And you think of Luke 10, Mary and Martha, these sisters, had different approaches to when Jesus came to town. Martha was like, Mary's just been sitting there listening to you all day.
And it says that Martha was distracted with much serving. And Jesus spoke to her, Martha, Martha, you've been busy with a lot of good stuff, but you haven't chosen what's best.
Listen to me. Verse 6, the father has spoken. When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified, and rightly so.
[25:32] They've just been rebuked by the divine voice from heaven. And I do feel bad for Peter here. At the end of chapter 16, Jesus said, get behind me, Satan.

And now the father rebukes him and says, listen to what Jesus says. He's been rebuked by the father, and the son. Two out of three. The Holy Spirit just needs to rebuke him and he's hit the trifecta.
He's been rebuked by the first two members of the Trinity just within the span of a chapter. But even in their fear, there can be no doubt about who Christ is.
There is no doubt about who he is in this moment. And so they cower down in fear, but verse seven, Jesus came and touched them saying, rise and have no fear.
And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. As amazing as the vision was, as terrifying as God's booming voice would have been, Jesus is the one who does away with fear.
[26:41] fear. Jesus is the one who overcomes fear. He is the substance of all hope. He's the ultimate reason why we can have no fear when the Father rebukes us.

He's the reason we cannot be afraid when the Father speaks in general. He's the reason we can have no fear when the Father reveals His glory to us. It's because of His Son.
And so think of the scene Jesus is revealed in all of His divine glory. He's standing by Himself on a high mountain. Old Testament saints are there, those who have died and those who have not, as if they've been resurrected, the ones who have died.
This truly is a preview of the second coming. But Jesus' first actions after this glorious vision, after this display of divine glory and power, His first actions are gentle and tender care for His followers.
He is indeed the Good Shepherd. That's not a role that He temporarily assumed, that is His heart.
Even in His second coming, He will still be a shepherd to His sinful people.

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[28:00] And interestingly, this is also a preview of how the disciples will respond to His crucifixion. they'll cower in fear. They'll hide themselves until Christ comes to them and tells them to not be afraid.

This encounter with Christ overcomes their fear in verse 8, because Christ is with them. He is the supreme one. He is the one they should have been looking to the whole time.
He is the one they should have been worshiping throughout this vision. And He is with them. Before I came on staff full time, I interned with Michael for a couple of summers and had spent a lot of time following him around.
And we'd go on hospital visits or home visits, all kinds of stuff. And I was never nervous during any of those meetings. And I was like, oh, this is pretty easy, you know, just answer their questions, pray with them, you know, this is great.
And then I went on one by myself. I was like, I should have paid more attention. The reason it seemed easy, the reason I wasn't anxious, is because Michael was there. I didn't have to say a word.
[29:08] I could just sit there and watch. And in a much greater sense, closeness to Christ is the strongest weapon against fear. Closeness to Jesus is your strongest weapon against fear and anxiety.

He is the only reason we can have no fear. He's the only reason we can have no fear of the Father's wrath because he has satisfied all of it. He is the only reason we can have no fear of the rage of this world because what can man do to us?
We will rise again as Christ has. He's the only reason why we can not be afraid of the consequences of our sin because all of it has been paid by him. He's the only reason we don't have to be afraid or scared of our own inadequacies or limitations because Jesus is all in all.
And so if you're afraid, draw in close to Jesus. His hand is always gentle on the backs of his timid sheep. Draw near to him.
And then thirdly, the trip down. The trip down, verse 9. 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.
[30:34] They were sworn to secrecy until Christ would rise. How difficult this must have been to keep this a secret. I think a couple of things here.

Jesus didn't want just some sign trackers or some wonder watchers to try to follow him and make him king as has already tried to happen. But I think maybe more importantly, he wanted these guys to fully understand the significance of what they just saw before they started to speak about it publicly.
And he knows once I rise again, I'll send my spirit to them to guide them into the truth and then we'll let them preach. Then we'll let them tell the world about what they've seen.
Jesus is transfigured here in this passage but what we see actually from the rest of the New Testament is that what happened to him in an instant happens to us slowly over a lifetime.
His transformation, his glorious transformation here in just an instant is what is slowly happening to us as we become more like him. And so that 2 Corinthians 3 18 passage I referenced earlier Paul says and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, beholding the glory of Christ are transformed, are transfigured into the same image from one degree of glory to another.
[32:15] We are transfigured to look like Christ as we look to Christ. And so keep your eyes on him, look to him, and bring others to see his glory for the first time.

We've not seen him with our eyes but we see him by faith in the word. And there's a great quote from J.C. Ryle that Maddie Johnson reminded me of recently as she was reading one of his books. And J.C. Ryle says this, it would be well if Christians studied the four Gospels more than they do. He who would be conformed to Christ's image and become a Christ-like person must be constantly studying Christ himself.
And go with me to conclude to 2 Peter chapter 1. The non-disclosure agreement was eventually lifted once Christ was risen from the dead and Peter spoke about it very clearly.
2 Peter chapter 1 verse 16. The gospel that Peter preached to these people has come under assault, particularly the second coming of Christ.
[33:40] And so Peter writes, 2 Peter 1 16. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

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For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.
This was an unforgettable moment for Peter. It was also an unforgettable lesson that he learned that when Jesus is speaking we are to be silent. And it's easy for us to think, man, it would have been incredible to be there, to see that sight of Christ would just be life-changing.
But do you know what Peter says? It was great, but there's something greater. Verse 19, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.
Peter says being there was great. A greater testimony to his deity is what the Bible says about him, what the scriptures teach us about him.
[35:02] The Bible is more reliable even than a voice from heaven. This event is a preview of his second coming, which is why Peter brings it up here to his audience.

And one day he will put his glory on display for the entire world. And the only way to make sure that you will look like him on that day is if you look to him on this day.
Do you look to him? Do you spend time with him? It's him alone who puts our fears to death. The call to fear not in this series is not a call to face our fears so that we can discover ourselves or so that we can feel proud about ourselves.
It's a call to trust in Christ who puts our fears to death through his death. And gives us confident hope through his resurrection. And because of him we don't fall down when we hear the father's voice.
We receive it with joy because we know what the father's message is. The father's message is his word and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.
[36:19] So friends do not be afraid for as Paul puts it in 1st Thessalonians 5. God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us.

And if you've not trusted him do it tonight right where you sit. Turn to him. Believe in him. Turn away from your sins. Obey him. And your encounter with Christ will be an unforgettable moment for you and not just for you but for all of heaven for all of eternity as the world reverberates with the praise of Christ as he saves his people to the praise of his glory.
Let's pray. Our father we thank you so much tonight for this vision of Christ. I pray that we would draw near to him. Believe in him.
And trust him. The good shepherd. And we cannot wait to see him in all of his glory. It's in his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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