

# Matthew 17:1-13

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] Turn to Matthew 17. Matthew chapter 17. Which is on page 822. And next Sunday morning, James Brilla 2 from Manila, Philippines is going to be speaking.

! That's something I look forward to. He's coming for a catalyst this week. And Paul Miners flew over, if you remember, for that long weekend in Manila to be at his ordination service. It would be really good to have him. Matthew 17 verses 1 to 13. So sometimes glimpses of glory, glimpses of glory can keep us going, especially through tough times and dark days, can't they?

So imagine, just for a moment, you're a mountain climber, and you're climbing Ben Nevis, or Mont Blanc, or perhaps Kilimanjaro, or even Snowden.

And you're absolutely shattered, and you feel like giving up. And every muscle in your body aches, and you can't feel your fingers and toes. Your rucksack that you're carrying, it feels like lead.

And you just want to turn back home, and you just want to turn back home, and get in the bed. But you notice, above you as you're climbing, the clouds begin to part, and you see the most glorious view.

[ 1 : 28 ] You see this vista of a snow-capped mountain. And you think, how good is this view from here? And so imagine how good it's going to be if I can get to the top, if I can make it there.

The glimpses of glory keeps you going in the grind. And so you get to the top of the mountain, and you're so glad. You're so glad that you kept going.

So can you see the view of glory in Matthew 17? For a brief moment, God the Father is revealing the true glory of God the Son.

And we sing the hymn, don't we, from heaven you came helpless. Babe, entered our world, your glory veiled. And that's true, isn't it?

When Jesus entered the world, when God became man and took on flesh, his glory was veiled. You look at Jesus in the manger, you think, normal baby.

[ 2 : 32 ] Nothing special. But here for a moment, God the Father draws back the veil. Just for a brief moment. And so Peter, James and John, they get, for a brief moment, a glimpse of Jesus' glory.

The glory that he had before he entered the world as a man. And the glory Jesus will have one day when he returns. With all his only angels.

And so look at chapter 16 and verse 27. Do you remember what Jesus said? I didn't deal with this verse last week. He says, doesn't he, the Son of Man is going to come with his angels, in the glory of his Father, with the glory of his Father.

And then he will repay each person according to what he's done. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Well, what's that about? Remember what Jesus said? I don't know about you, but I sometimes find it hard to believe that Jesus will come back.

[ 3 : 42 ] Jesus will come back, has he, for 2,000 years? There's no real sign of him coming back. Will he come back in his glory? Which is why he says that verse, which ends Matthew 16, seems so puzzling, doesn't it?

Jesus promises that some of his disciples who are standing there, they will not die until they see the Son of Man. That's the Lord Jesus coming in his kingdom. Does that refer to Jesus' second coming?

Does that return to his coming in glory? His return. Well, all those disciples have died and Jesus still hasn't come back. Well, look at 17 verse 1, six days later.

Jesus takes up with him on a high mountain his three closest friends. Peter, James and John. And if you've read your Bible at all, you will know that mountains in the Bible are very significant.

There are huge parallels with what happened here, with when Moses went up onto Mount Sinai. And so here is the better Moses. Here is the greater Moses.

[ 4 : 49 ] And he goes up Mount Hermon, near Lake Galilee. And he gives these three disciples a glimpse of his glory. It's what is known as the transfiguration.

And they see, don't they, for a brief moment, the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. So they and we can be sure that Jesus will come back one day.

I've got three questions this morning. First of all, I want us to think, why this glimpse of glory was needed? Why this glimpse of glory was needed? When we read our Bible, I think it's the most important question to ask.

Why? Why is this here? Put it another way. Why is the transfiguration at this point in Jesus' life? What is it doing here in Matthew chapter 17?

Well, the context helps us, as it always does. Think about what we've studied. We've seen that Jesus has been up north, hasn't he? He's been in Galilee and there's been huge euphoria.

[ 5 : 51 ] He's become a celebrity. And then we see that Peter reveals Jesus' true identity. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Do you remember that two weeks ago? And then we see the euphoria shut it really quickly.

Because the Lord Jesus says, well, this is the kind of Christ I'm going to be. I will go to Jerusalem, I will suffer and I will die. It'll mean death for the Lord Jesus.

And the transfiguration happens between two predictions of Jesus' death. So look at chapter 16, verse 21. There's a prediction of Jesus' death there.

And then if you flick over to chapter 17 and verse 12. The Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands. Two predictions of suffering.

And not only that, do you remember? Not only must the Christ die, but those who follow him will die as well. 16.24. And so the question is, what is going to keep Jesus going?

[ 6 : 56 ] And what are the followers of Jesus? How are they going to keep going knowing that the cross is death away? What keeps you and I going as we take up our cross?

What will keep you going this week as you try to live as a follower of the Lord Jesus? As I look around this morning and I imagine that there are some of us here right now this morning who are finding it very hard to follow Jesus.

It feels like climbing a really high mountain. Maybe you're the only person in your school who's a Christian.

Maybe you're the only person in your family who is really serious about trying to love the Lord Jesus and do what he says. And maybe you feel kind of ground down, pressed down by the pressure and the constant assault of being a Christian in this country.

I wonder what we'd say to our brothers and sisters that we prayed for this morning in those countries like Northern Nigeria and Pakistan and Pakina Faso. Who are suffering.

[ 8 : 01 ] What would we say to encourage them? To keep on going? What will it be that keeps us going? Well here it is. Here is what will keep you going and it is this.

Glimpsing the glory of Jesus Christ. The glimpse of glory kept Jesus going. And it kept Peter and James and John going and it will keep you going.

And so I want to show you from this passage that there is no one more glorious than Jesus Christ. And there is no one more excellent and there is no one more beautiful and no one more majestic. And there is no one more worth listening to. And no one more worth following. And no one more worth beholding than Jesus.

The devil is very clever isn't it? We've seen that in our series on Sunday nights. The devil is very clever but the devil has no glory. And so what the devil does is he tries and he transfers.

[ 9 : 06 ] He transfers the glory that rightly belongs to Jesus to other things. And he's very good at it. And so that glory transfer, he transfers to Allah.

And to football. And to shopping. And to work. And to sex. And all manner of other things. But this passage shows you and I where true glory belongs.

So we've considered how this glimpse of glory was needed. Let's think secondly. How this glimpse of glory was revealed. How this glimpse of glory was revealed. And it's revealed by a vision and a voice.

So first of all let's look at the vision. Look at what Peter, James and John saw that day in Mount Hermon. Verse 2. They saw Jesus transfigured. Before them. Jesus was changed.

Jesus was transformed. Literally metamorphosed. So much so that verse 2. Look what it says. His face shone like the sun.

[10:14] And his clothes became white as light. And whenever people glimpse the glory of Jesus. They are overwhelmed by the brilliance of his being. So you think of Saul.

And there he is. He's on the road to Damascus. He's been persecuting Christians. He's been killing Christians. And in Acts chapter 9 in verse 3. Tells us that suddenly a light shines from heaven. And it flashes all around him. Because the all glorious Jesus was revealing himself to Saul. And so bright was the light that it blinded him for three days.

And then you think of John in exile. On the Isle of Patmos. And Revelation chapter 1 verse 16. Tells us what the face of this glorious Christ is like.

It says. His face was like the sun shining in its noonday strength. His face was like the sun shining in its noonday strength.

[11:15] Do you remember the sun? This time last year isn't it? Do you remember? You'd get up in the morning. Just cast your mind back to those glorious days. You'd get up in the morning.

And the sun. It wouldn't be high in the sky. You'd drink your coffee looking out. And everything felt great. You'd be able to look at the sun rising. And there was heat wasn't there when you'd go out of bed.

But you can look at the sun. But when the sun was at its brightest. You know in London when it's really really bright. And the sun is bright. And it kind of shines off the streets. You can't at that point then look at the sun.

Can you? Because it's too bright. Damages your eyes. You can't watch it for long. Because it's so bright. And when it comes to noon.

And it's one of those really really hot days in London. None of us can look at the sun without being blind yet. And so here in Matthew 17. The sun is beginning to rise. Not the sun S-U-N.

[12:21] But the sun S-O-N. And it won't fully rise. Until he's raised from the dead. And he's ascended into heaven. And he's returning in glory. But here Peter, James and John.

They see the sunrise. They see a glimpse of the true face of Christ. It's been veiled in humanity. But suddenly the veil is taken away.

And in verse 3. They see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Remember Moses the first great law giver. Elijah in many ways the first great prophet. And together they represent the whole of the Old Testament.

The law and the prophets. And Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about his death. And that strengthens this theme doesn't it? That the purpose of the vision.

For Peter, James and John. And for Jesus. Was to prepare him and all who follow him. To endure death. This light a bright cloud overshadows them.

[13:21] That's unusual isn't it? Clouds. When they overshadow. What colour are they normally? They're dark aren't they?

Clouds which are bright. Don't normally overshadow. But this is not a dark cloud. It's not a rain cloud. It's a bright cloud. It's quite like any other cloud.

Why is it like that? Well you know that don't you? Because it's the cloud of God's presence. All through the Old Testament. The cloud is a symbol of God's presence.

The cloud of God's glory. Which appeared at various times in the Old Testament. Now that cloud hovers over the transfer to Jesus. And it's from that cloud of voice speaks.

And so we've seen the vision. Let's hear the voice. And then Peter, James and John and Jesus. And indeed Moses and Elijah. They heard the voice of God the Father. Verse 5. This is my son.

[14:25] My beloved son. With whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him. You've heard that voice before. This is a replay. Same thing.

Same voice. And it's baptism. This is my son. Those of us who are children. We know something of this.

We know some of the deep love. And the deep pride. That a parent can have. For a child. Yesterday.

And Jasper. Five years old. Ran park run for the first time. It's amazing isn't it? I can imagine as. Jono as he crosses. Jono thought. That's my boy.

Isn't it? That's my boy. You see your child doing. Something. Wonderful. You say. That's my boy. That's my girl. My heart filled with joy.

[ 15 : 24 ] Even though I am evil. And even though I'm evil. I can feel that towards my earthly son. How much more does God. Who is the perfect father. Feel that towards his. Own son. His heavenly son.

Who's from all eternity. And God looks. At God the son. And he says. Amen. That's my boy. Let me just give you a little sidebar here.

I want you to notice that God is a happy God. Children and young people growing up in this church. I never. I never ever want you to think that God is a scolding headmaster.

God is a happy God. God is not grumpy. God is not mean. He's generous.

God is joyful in him. And he delights. And he is glorious. He delights in his glorious son Jesus. He's pleased with his beautiful son Jesus.

[ 16 : 24 ] And he wants you to listen to his son Jesus. And you see how the voice. From heaven confirms the vision. The voice is the commentary. You know you. I can never understand what an audio commentary is.

On a film. But there is such a thing. Isn't there? There's audio commentary on this vision. And it's so that Peter, James and John.

And all of us who come after. We know what we're seeing. And it is striking. That it's only after the voice. That they fall on their faces. In terror. It's the voice that explains the vision.

It is the voice that says to the disciples. You're not in the presence of three great men. That's what Peter thought. Peter thought it was kind of the top trumps. Of Old Testament religion. Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

They're the three all time great. So let's build three tents. Booths. For each of them. But they're not three great men. There is one son of God.

[ 17 : 24 ] And the other two are simply pointing at him. And the message is quite emphatic. Isn't it? You can't listen. You can't miss it. If you can give another interpretation. Please see me afterwards.

The interpretation is listen to him. And so when Peter comes later in life as an older man. To recall this day of transfiguration. It's really interesting.

It is the voice in 2 Peter 1. More than the vision that he focuses on. The voice commands you to listen to Jesus. To listen to him. When he says he is the Christ.

The son of the living God. Well. There's all sorts of voices. That will tell you different things about Jesus. Don't listen to them. God the father is saying. Listen to Jesus about Jesus.

Listen to Jesus about. What kind of Jesus he is. And what it means to follow Jesus. So there's lots of people out there. Who will tell you. Actually to be a Christian is like this.

[ 18 : 22 ] Or to be a Christian is like that. And they've reinterpreted what the New Testament says. But listen to Jesus. He should know he is the son. And listen to Jesus.

When he says he is coming back. With the glory of his father. Well in verse 7. Jesus calms his friends fear. And when they dare to look up. What do they see? Verse 8. They see only Jesus.

The vision is over. The voice is gone. They begin to go down the mountain. As they do. Notice what Jesus says to them. Verse 9. Jesus commands them.

Tell no one the vision. Until the son of man is raised from the dead. Why? Why? Well because. This glimpse of glory. Is only a foretaste.

It's only a trailer isn't it? So. On buses ever at the moment. And you can see the trailer for Toy Story 4. But you haven't seen the whole film yet have you?

[ 19 : 24 ] Because it's only a trailer. And this here is only a trailer for Peter, James and John. It's not the whole film. This is the sunrise.

It's not the midday sun. You've still got the crucifixion and the resurrection and the ascension and the glorification of Jesus to come. And that's why they had to wait until after the resurrection.

To fully understand this glimpse of glory. And until then they must keep stern. But again notice here. Which is really interesting. I had not really seen this until this week. Notice what.

Who the transfiguration is for. Whose benefit is it for? It's for the benefit of Peter, James and John. Do you see verse 1? Jesus took them with him.

Jesus took them up by themselves. Verse 3. Moses and Elijah appear before them.

[ 20 : 28 ] And the cloud envelops them. And the voice speaks to them. And notice the voice says this is my son. It doesn't say you are my son.

Isn't that interesting? Because the voice was not for Jesus' benefit. It was for his followers' benefit. And now they come down the mountain. And they come back to the reality of a troubled world.

And Peter, James and John. They find themselves. We'll deal with it in the next couple of weeks. They find themselves. The disciples unable to help a demon possessed boy. We'll look at that in two weeks. But just look at the contrast for a moment. Look at the contrast between the glory on the mountain top. And the reality of life at the bottom of the mountain. I was telling you to say to me.

I was telling you to say to me. I was telling you to say to me. And he said to me. You'll be using Raphael's painting. Won't you? And I said.

[ 21 : 31 ] Of course. And went home. And googled who Raphael was. And then his painting. And his painting is for the Transfiguration. And hangs in the Vatican.

And let me tell you. Drawing all my history knowledge. It's an unusual painting. Because it's a painting in two halves. And the two halves depict these two incidents.

In Matthew 17. Captures really well. According to the experts. The contrast between the top of the mountain. And the bottom of the mountain. And the upper half of the picture. Shows the Transfiguration.

While the lower half. Depicts the disciples. Attempting unsuccessfully. To heal this demon possessed boy. And I think that's the point Matthew's kind of made. The key to living down the mountain.

With all its mess. And its misery. Is to glimpse. The glory of Christ. Who is up on the mountain. And so again. I don't know what difficulties are represented. Here this morning.

[ 22 : 32 ] I don't know what your troubles are. There are troubles aren't there. I know something in my own heart. In my own struggles. And I know that there will be some really big things. Going on in your lives.

In the lives of those of us who have gathered here. And I don't want to sound glib. And I don't want to sound trite. And I don't want to sound simplistic. But the answer to our troubles. Is to behold the glory of Christ.

One of the best books on preaching. In the last 30 years. Is John Piper's book. The Supremacy of God in Preaching. It's a really wonderful book. In the introduction.

He tells the story. Of him preaching a New Year's Day sermon. On Isaiah 6. We sang it. Isaiah 6. Holy, holy, holy. Lord God Almighty. The amazing vision of the holiness of God.

And Piper says that. On that first Sunday of the year. He decided to kind of test himself. He wanted to display the majesty. And the glory of God. He had a test with himself. He decided to preach a sermon without any application.

[ 23 : 35 ] And normally rightly he says. Preachers should always give application. But on that day. He decided not to give any. He wanted to show his people. The greatness of God. And see that that would meet the needs.

Of his congregation. What John Piper didn't know. That was sitting in the congregation. Was a family. Who a few weeks earlier.

Had discovered. That their child was being sexually abused. By a close relative. And they were there that day. First Sunday of the year. They heard. At a sermon on Isaiah 6. And a few weeks later. They give to see John Piper.

He meets with the family. And he discovers. What's happened in their family. And the father says to him. John. These have been the hardest years of my life.

Hardest months of my life. But you know what's got us through. What's got us through. Is the vision of the greatness of God's holiness. That you gave us in the first week of January. That's been a rock on which we can stand.

[ 24 : 33 ] And Piper concludes wonderfully. As kind of Piper does so well. He says. The glory of God is relevant. It doesn't matter if surveys.

Turn up a list of perceived needs. That does not include. The supreme greatness. Of the God of grace. But that is the deepest need of our people. Our people are starving for God.

And we could similarly say. The greatness. And the glory of Jesus. Are relevant. Whatever you're going through this morning. And whatever you go through this week. And whatever you go through this summer.

What you need is to behold the glory of Jesus. Okay. Let me finish. How do we do that? How do we do that? That's the last question. Well we do that by following.

God the father's command. What is God the father's command? Listen to him. And I want to finish up. By turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Okay. I said come with me. To 2 Corinthians chapter 3. [ 25 : 36 ] 2 Corinthians chapter 3. If you don't know where it is. The person next to you will help you. 2 Corinthians chapter 3. And I want us to notice. In verse 18.

Of 2 Corinthians chapter 3. How Paul describes the Christian life. He's describing the Christian life. And he says the Christian life. Is about beholding the glory of the Lord. So that is why you read your Bible. And that is why you go to Bible study.

That is why you come to church on a Sunday. To behold the glory of the Lord. One day all those who see Jesus.

Will see Jesus face to face. That's what we long for. And we'll see him by sight. But now we don't see him by sight. We see him by faith. In his words.

[ 26 : 33 ] The Bible. And do you see that in verse 18. What happens when we do that. And we. With unveiled face. Beholding the glory of the Lord.

Are being. Transfigured. Transformed. Into the same image. From one degree of glory to another. We're transformed. We're transfigured. It's the same word. Same word that is used of Jesus in Matthew 17. He is transfigured. And as we look at him in his word.

We are transfigured. And so. Friends. The way that we behold Jesus. And the way that we become more and more like Jesus. Is to gaze on him in his word.

So have you noticed that you hum the music that you listen to? And have you noticed that you speak with the area that you grew up in?

[ 27 : 33 ] And have you noticed that you imitate the people that you admire most? And those who you like isn't it? Some of you dress a bit like them.

You sound a bit like them. And so it is with Jesus Christ. That as we fix our attention on him.

That as we listen to him. That as we behold his glory. We are changed. We start to sound a bit like him. And so when we do this.

That seeing is not only believing. It is also becoming. We become more like him. We are changed and transformed. And so do you see how a glimpse of glory this week can keep you going?

One day all who love Jesus will see Jesus with our own eyes. But until that day we see him by faith in his word. And we can listen to him.

[ 28 : 37 ] And we can behold his glory. And that makes all the difference doesn't it? To life down the mountain. In all the mess. And all the misery. And all the pain.

Because it is Jesus Christ. And seeing him. That will get you through. Let's pray.