

JOHN OF ANTIOCH, BORN THREE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER JESUS, HAD PREPARED FOR A CAREER IN LAW. VERY INTELLIGENT AND EXTREMELY ELOQUENT, HE WAS EXPECTED TO BE A GREAT STATESMAN AND LAWMAKER.

AT THE AGE OF 23, JOHN WAS INTRODUCED TO CHRISTIANITY, WAS BAPTIZED, AND ABANDONED LAW TO BECOME A PASTOR. HE WAS AN EXCELLENT PREACHER AND HIS TALENT WAS KNOWN TO THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

HE WAS ELECTED THE PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, FROM WHICH HE LAUNCHED A CRUSADE AGAINST WORLDINESS. THE EMPRESS THOUGHT IT WAS A PERSONAL ATTACK AND CHARGED HIM WITH TREASON. THE PEOPLE, HOWEVER, DEFENDED JOHN SO PASSIONATELY, SHE GAVE UP.

JOHN'S SERMONS, LETTERS, THEOLOGICAL PAPERS, LITURGICAL WORKS, AND BIBLE COMMENTARIES ARE SO IMPRESSIVE THAT HE'S CALLED ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, WHICH MEANS 'GOLDEN-MOUTHED.'

HE CLAIMED THE MOUNTAIN OF TRANSFIGURATION AS HIS OWN. THROUGH FAITH, EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN REPEAT HIS WORDS: A STRANGE AND MOST GLORIOUS MYSTERY DO I SEE.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD SIGNALS THE END OF EPIPHANY, A SEASON WHEN JESUS MAKES OBVIOUS HIS DIVINITY. THIS IS OUR LAST GLIMPSE OF ~~THE~~ ^{THAT} MAJESTY - THE MOST WONDROUS DISPLAY OF HIS HEAVENLY GLORY!

THE APOSTLE JOHN LINKS THIS MOMENT TO THE GLORY OF CHRISTMAS. *THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY.* PETER WRITES: *WE WERE EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY. HE RECEIVED HONOR AND GLORY FROM THE FATHER, WHO SAID: 'THIS IS MY BELOVED SON.'* *WE HEARD THIS VOICE FROM HEAVEN, FOR WE WERE WITH HIM ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN.*

LET'S GO THERE.
CHRIST'S CLOTHES ARE INTENSELY WHITE, WAY BEYOND BLEACHING! PETER, JAMES AND JOHN ARE DUMBFOUNDED. THEY SEE THEIR LORD'S FACE LITERALLY BRIGHT AS LIGHTNING; EVEN HIS CLOTHES CAN'T HIDE THE BRILLIANCE. THEN, MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEAR! YOU CAN'T DREAM THIS STUFF UP!

... ONCE, ON A SMALL NOISY FERRY I SAW A HAMMERHEAD SHARK GO BY JUST BELOW THE SURFACE. I TURNED TO THE YOUNG WOMAN BEHIND ME TO SEE IF SHE SAW IT AND SHE JUST NODDED HER HEAD, WITH A FACE THAT SAID, *YOU'RE NOT SEEING THINGS; I SAW IT, TOO.* PETER, JAMES AND JOHN HAD TO LOOK AT EACH OTHER TO MAKE SURE THEY WEREN'T HALLUCINATING.

... MOSES?
MOSES GAVE ISRAEL THE LAWS ON WORSHIP AND ELIJAH RESTORED THAT TRUE WORSHIP AFTER LOUSY KINGS MESSED WITH IT! THIS IS SO CRAZY, PETER CRIES: *RABBI, IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE. LET US BUILD THREE BOOTHS LIKE DURING OUR FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES WORSHIP.* HE'S TERRIFIED, EXCITED, AND BONZO!

JAMES AND JOHN ALMOST WET THEIR UNDER-LINENS WHEN A VOICE COMES OUT OF THE CLOUD: *THIS IS MY BELOVED SON; LISTEN TO HIM.* ...AHH, THAT MEANS NO BOOTHS, PETER! AND, NO MOSES, NO ELIJAH - ONLY JESUS!

2 WE WISH WE COULD HAVE BEEN THERE. YET, EVERYONE IN THE BIBLE WHO MEETS GOD IN VISION, DREAM OR THROUGH ANGELS IS PETRIFIED. I'M SURE IT HAS TO DO WITH OUR SINFUL NATURE. WE KNOW WHAT WE DESERVE FROM GOD AND IT ISN'T A PAT ON THE BACK! GOD IS SO HOLY – SO FAR BEYOND US!

THE THUNDEROUS VOICE FROM HEAVEN PARALYZES THE BOYS. THEIR FACES ARE BREATHING DIRT, WHEN JESUS PATS THEM ON THE BACK AND SAYS, YOU CAN GET UP NOW; THERE'S NO REASON TO BE AFRAID.

THEY LIFT UP THEIR EYES, SQUINTING JUST IN CASE, LOOK AROUND, AND SEE NO ONE BUT JESUS ONLY! THE SIGHT OF A HEAVENLY BRIGHT JESUS WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN. THEY HAD SEEN THE MAJESTY OF GOD IN JESUS HIMSELF, NOT JUST HIS WORDS OR MIRACLES! NOW, EVERY TIME THEY LOOK AT JESUS, THEY'LL AGREE WITH CHRYSOSTOM, A STRANGE AND MOST GLORIOUS MYSTERY DO I SEE.

CHRYSOSTOM, LIKE PAUL, SEES GLORY IN THE HUMAN FACE OF JESUS...A FACE SMILING AT HIS DISCIPLES; A FACE CRYING FOR THOSE REFUSING HIS LOVE; A FACE COVERED IN BLOOD AS HE CRIES OUT OF THE DARKNESS: ~~IT IS FINISHED!~~
FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!

DURING JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S LIFE, THE FIRST GREAT CATHEDRALS WERE BUILT...WITH TOWERING ARCHES REACHING TO HEAVEN, ADORNED WITH MAGNIFICENT WORKS OF CHRISTIAN ART, AND CHOIRS ECHOING ANGELIC ALLELUIAS. THEY WERE MEANT TO BE MAGNIFICENT SO GOD'S PEOPLE COULD GO UP THE MOUNTAIN TO GET A GLIMPSE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN CHRIST.

PEOPLE GATHERED BEFORE WORSHIP TO PRAY AND PREPARE TO MEET THE MYSTERIOUS CHRIST. THEN, THE LITURGY SPOKE AND SUNG THE GLORY OF JESUS IN THE WORD, LEADING THEM FROM THE DARKNESS OF SIN TO THE TABLE OF GRACE. THERE, JESUS WOULD PAT THEM ON THE BACK, SAYING: RISE, AND HAVE NO FEAR. THEY'D LIFT UP THEIR EYES AND SEE NO ONE BUT JESUS ONLY.

THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION WAS NOT THE GLORIOUS VISION; IT WAS WHEN JESUS WALKED DOWN THE HILL WITH HIS DISCIPLES, IN PLAIN OLD FLESH. JESUS, CARRYING A LAMB, PRAYING IN A GARDEN, AND NAILED TO A CROSS GIVES COMFORT AND PEACE BECAUSE THE GLORY OF GOD IS VISIBLE IN HIM.

THE HIGHLIGHT OF WORSHIP TODAY ISN'T MOSES THUNDERING THE LAW BEHIND A VEIL OR ELIJAH'S MIRACULOUS PROPHET'S CLOAK. THE PINNACLE IS WHEN PROPHET JESUS VEILS HIMSELF IN BREAD AND WINE, PATS YOU ON THE BACK, AND SAYS, DON'T BE AFRAID; LET'S GO AWAY TOGETHER.

WHEN YOU LIFT UP YOUR EYES, YOU SEE NO ONE BUT JESUS ONLY. WHEN JESUS HIDES HIS GLORY, YOU ARE BEING GLORIFIED BY HIM. THIS IS WHAT JOHN THE GOLDEN-MOUTHED MEANT WHEN HE SAID, A STRANGE AND MOST GLORIOUS MYSTERY DO I SEE. IN BREAD AND WINE IS THE TRANSFIGURED CHRIST!

THIS IS THE LAST SUNDAY SINGING ALLELUIA UNTIL AFTER YOUR FORTY DAYS OF LENTEN REPENTANCE. YOU'LL WATCH JESUS PREPARE TO DIE – FOR YOU! WITH ASHES ON YOUR HEAD AND EYES CAST DOWN IN REMORSÉ, THE LORD WILL MEET YOU HERE AND LIFT YOU UP...SO THAT, WITH CHRYSOSTOM, YOU CAN SAY: A STRANGE AND MOST GLORIOUS MYSTERY DO I SEE. AMEN.

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