

WEEK EIGHT: TRANSFIGURATION

Monday

Matthew 17:1–9

One day Jesus took three of his disciples – Peter, James, and John – up on a high mountain. When they got to the top of the mountain, something happened that amazed the disciples.

All of a sudden, Jesus was transfigured right in front of his disciples, that is his figure transitioned. He suddenly changed greatly in the way he looked. His face became as bright as the sun, and his clothes became as white as lightning.

Then something else happened that also amazed the disciples. Moses and Elijah (who had both been dead for hundreds of years) suddenly appeared and stood next to Jesus. Moses and Elijah were great prophets who had lived centuries before, but now they didn't live on earth anymore, yet here they were alive right next to Jesus! God had sent them from heaven at this very moment to talk with Jesus on the mountain.

The disciples somehow recognized and knew who Moses and Elijah were, and they were excited to see them. Peter said, "Lord. It is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make a three tent shelters here – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While Peter was still talking, a bright cloud came and enveloped everyone. The disciples heard a voice from the cloud say, "This is my Son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him."

When the disciples heard God's voice, they were so afraid that they fell with their faces to the ground. Jesus came and touched them and told them to not be afraid. When they looked up, they only saw Jesus – Moses and Elijah were gone – and Jesus looked once again like he usually did.

As they came down the mountain, Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone what they had seen until after he had risen from the dead. The disciples obeyed Jesus' request – they didn't tell anyone what they had seen. Until later, after Jesus had risen from the dead, they told many people that they had seen Jesus' glory shine there on that mountain. They knew he was true God and truly their Savior. His glory had not been robbed, only hidden, so that he could allow himself to suffer and die in our place.

- **What are some of the amazing things that happened on the mount of transfiguration?**
- **When God's voice came from heaven in the cloud, what did it say?**
- **Why must we listen to Jesus? What has he told us?**

Close with prayer

Tuesday

Exodus 19–20

The people of Israel walked through the desert. After a while, they came to a mountain called Sinai. This was a very special mountain. God called to Moses from the mountain. He told Moses his plans for the people of Israel. God said, "You are my people. I will do great things for you, and you must obey me." The people agreed to obey God.

But they needed to know how to obey God. So God told Moses to climb up the mountain. He wanted to give Moses a gift for the people. God gave them the Ten Commandments.

In the Commandments, God told the people not to worship anyone or anything but him. He told them not to use his name in wrong ways. God wanted the people to have a day of rest and worship each week. He also told them to obey their parents and leaders. He commanded his people not to murder or steal. Husbands and wives should respect each other and their marriage. God told his people not to do bad things or speak bad things about each other. People should not be jealous or try to get others in trouble.

Now the people knew what God expected of them. It is not easy to obey all these rules. In fact, we can't do it. We need God's help and forgiveness through Jesus, our Savior.

• **Which of God's commands is hardest for you to keep?**

Dear God, thank you for giving me rules. They are for my own good and safety. Help me to obey them, and forgive me for Jesus' sake when I disobey them. Amen.

Wednesday
Jonah 1-4

Today, Ash Wednesday, marks the beginning of the season of Lent. Lent is a time of repentance. During the weeks of Lent, God's people think about their life and the sins they have committed. These are the sins for which Jesus suffered and died.

Lent is also a time to focus on God and his deliverance. Long ago, the prophet Jonah experienced deliverance. Jonah had disobeyed God's command to go and preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. Instead, Jonah boarded a boat and headed in another direction.

But no one can run away from God. When a storm came up, the sailors with Jonah on the boat threw Jonah into the water in order to calm the storm. Then God delivered Jonah in an amazing way. He sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah remained inside the fish for three days.

Do you know what Jonah did while he was inside the fish? He thanked God for saving him. After three days, the fish placed Jonah on the shore, and Jonah went to preach to the people of Nineveh. The people listened to Jonah's words about their sins. And they repented.

To show their repentance, the people wore sackcloth and put ashes on their face. The ashes that people sometimes receive in worship on Ash Wednesday remind us that we too need to repent so that we may receive the forgiveness Jesus earned for us with his suffering and death. And the three days Jonah spent inside the fish – Jesus compared them to the three days he spent in the tomb before rising to life again on Easter Sunday!

- **Thank God for saving you by taking all your sins away because of Jesus.**

Dear God, during this Lenten season, help me to turn my heart to you. Forgive my sin and fill me with your joy and peace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

Matthew 4:1-11

After Jesus was baptized and right before he began his ministry, we went out of town into the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil.

Jesus did not eat for 40 days and 40 nights, which was kind of a religious custom to cleanse and flush the body's system as well as to practice being in control of your flesh, instead of letting your flesh control you with carnal cravings and desires. At the end of the 40 days of no eating, Jesus was very hungry. Now, the devil is God's enemy. The devil is an angel created by God, who rebelled against God and is now fallen from God's grace seeking to lead God's children, whom he loves, away from him. And the devil knew Jesus must be hungry. He came to Jesus and tried to get him to sin. The devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

"It is written," Jesus answered him, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3). It would not have been sinful for Jesus to eat bread or to turn stones into bread, but Jesus recognized that his spiritual focus was more important than his physical hunger, and he was not going to allow himself to be led by the devil.

Then the devil took Jesus to the city of Jerusalem and had him stand on the very highest point of the city at the top of the temple. Again the devil tried to get Jesus to sin. The devil even used words from the Bible to try and trick Jesus and make him sin. He said, "God will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11). And the devil told Jesus to jump off the top of the temple. If you really are the Son of God, the devil said, God will save you.

Again Jesus answered the devil by telling him what the Bible says. "It is written," he said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

Then the devil took Jesus to the top of a high mountain and showed him all the glorious kingdoms of the world. "All these I will give you," the devil said, "if you will worship me."

Then Jesus said to the devil, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve'" (Deuteronomy 6:13).

Then the devil left him, and angels came to help Jesus.

Jesus was tempted by the devil to sin, but Jesus overcame the devil with God's Word. Through faith in Jesus, we too can overcome temptation by turning to God's Word and by looking to Jesus. Jesus never sinned, but always obeyed the Father. When God looks at us, he sees Jesus' perfect life, because of our faith in Jesus as our Savior. Therefore, we can trust in Jesus as we fight against the devil's temptations too.

- **What did Jesus use all three times to overcome the devil's temptations?**
- **Did Jesus ever give in to temptation and sin?**
- **What should we do when we are tempted?**

Close with prayer

Friday
Numbers 21:4–9

The Israelites were tired of living in the desert. They were tired of all their wandering. And they complained and grumbled against God. They said they should never have left Egypt. They complained that there was no food and no water. They said they were sick of eating manna – even though it was special food that God sent from heaven just for them!

Because the Israelites were so ungrateful for God's care for them and for all his blessings, God became very angry. Then the Lord sent deadly poisonous snakes to their camp. The snakes bit the people, and the people became very sick, and many died.

The people came to Moses. They said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayer to God asking him to save his people from the snakes.

God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and put it up on a high pole, so everyone could see it. Anyone who would look at it would be healed of the snake bites. So Moses made the snake and hung it on the pole. Everyone who looked at the bronze snake hanging on the pole was healed. This is how God saved his people from snakes when his people had sinned against him.

God has given us something much better than a bronze snake on a pole. God has given us his only Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. When Jesus was here on earth long ago, Jesus said that he would be lifted up, like that snake on the pole. And so Jesus was lifted up – to hang on the cross and to suffer and die for us. Everyone, who looks to him trusting him for the healing they need, is saved from sin and death and the devil, and they will live eternally.

- **Why was it sinful for the Israelites to complain against God?**
- **What did God do to save his people?**

Close with prayer