

The Transfiguration

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[0 : 00] If you turn with me to the portion that we read together in Luke's Gospel and chapter 9, you find in verses 30 and 31 the words, And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

There, on the Mount of Transfiguration, heaven touches earth.

The veil that ordinarily shrouds these higher realities, this higher realm, from our perception, from our vision, is temporarily drawn aside.

And we are permitted to view mysteries. Mysteries that leave us dazzled. Mysteries that overwhelm us. To the same extent as Peter, who spoke he knew not what.

So overwhelmed was he by the situation into which he had been brought. And yet, as we're there on the mountaintop, we're not to fall into silence.

[1 : 27] We're gazing through this divinely provided window into heaven. But it's been recorded for our instruction. It's been recorded because it presents a message that we need to hear.

And so, though there's much that we don't fully understand, we are to press into this passage with reverent carefulness, so that we may get enlightenment and strengthening in our faith.

And as you look at the passage, it's fairly evident that there are perhaps four different sorts of sermon that could be preached from it.

One might focus on the supernatural change in our Lord, in his appearance, in his clothing. One might focus on the fact that there with him are Moses and Elijah, two venerable representatives of the age that was passed.

Or we might focus on the privilege of the disciples and the way in which Peter blurted out what he said. And, of course, we might finally look at the overshadowing cloud of the divine presence and the Father's word of commendation.

[2 : 49] At each of those aspects, worthy of contemplation, there is a deep there. They provide readily enough for more than one sermon.

But we don't want to be unduly long today. So we must select one. And if you've been at the two previous services I've taken, it's obvious it's going to be the second of those things.

The two men talking with him, Moses and Elijah. We're going to look for a few moments at their conversation with Jesus.

And first of all, we have to notice the care with which not only Luke, but also Matthew and Mark place this event and this conversation in its context.

We have first of all to notice the context of this conversation. Firstly, its context is that it takes place within a week of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Son of God.

[3 : 56] And although we're not explicitly told the way the passages set out, it would seem that in that intervening week, our Lord had been teaching his disciples regarding the nature of the death that awaited him, the fact of his resurrection, indeed also the fact of his returning in glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.

So we have here a period in our Lord's ministry on earth where he was directing his disciples' thoughts towards who he himself was, the mission that he'd been given by the Father and the precise detail of the way in which he would leave this world.

He knew what was before him on the pathway of suffering. And we know that he shrank from the reality of the cross with all the revulsion that a sinless humanity could muster.

He didn't alter his purpose. He didn't shake his will as to completing the task that the Father had allotted him. But he had no mitigation in his human nature regarding the full horror of the rejection, desertion, agony, shame that was involved in being the sin-bearer.

And so inevitably as he was teaching his disciples these things in this week between Peter's confession and the Mount of Transfiguration, he was turning them over in his own mind.
[5 : 47] It wasn't just a matter of his public or his teaching, his teaching to his disciples. It inevitably was coming out of his own inner experience. as he too was being led to contemplate the reality of the cross in all its horror.

And also we see the context of the Mount of Transfiguration set not just in terms of a preaching ministry regarding the cross but set also in the context of prayer.
He went up on the mountain to pray and as he was praying. Now again we're not told what he talked to the father about.

But it's altogether reasonable to suppose in the light of the teaching ministry he'd engaged in in the previous week that at the forefront of his mind was the culmination of his earthly mission and that there on the Mount of Transfiguration there was a prevision of what would recur in intensified form in the garden of Gethsemane.

Remember there in the agony of his suffering he said father if you are willing remove this cup from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done.

[7 : 19] And we're told that on that occasion an angel appeared from heaven strengthening him. And it's the same sort of scenario that's found here.

The father hears the prayer of his beloved son and makes provision for strengthening him in his humanity in the light of the ordeal he's about to undergo.

And he has given to him this anticipation of heavenly glory as regards his mortal body. He's pointed by the father through the dark valley to the joy that is set before him so that he may endure the cross despising the shame.

From the depths of the heavenly cloud we hear the father's ringing endorsement of his person and of his status my son my chosen one.

But here it's not an angel who's sent to encourage him but Moses and Elijah. And that brings us to the second thought.

[8 : 40] What is the significance of the fact that it's Moses and Elijah who appear on the mountain? We mustn't think that this in any way reflects negatively on the angelic hosts.

Peter later on in his epistle talks about the way in which the salvation to be brought by Christ was a theme into which the prophets searched and inquired carefully and that regarding the gospel message of salvation in Christ and his suffering and subsequent glory those are things the angels long to look into.

It wasn't a matter of angelic indifference. It wasn't a matter of angelic incompetence that they were not sent on this occasion. It was rather that there was something far more fitting in the presence of Moses and Elijah.

It's a different sort of comfort that's being extended to Jesus. Over the previous week he'd been teaching his disciples his disciples on earth and how slow they were to understand how difficult pupils they were to teach.

They couldn't catch on to what the Lord was saying to them. Indeed like Peter they turned away from the thought that the Messiah should suffer far be it from the Lord and the Lord had to say no Peter I reject that utterly because what our Lord was telling them regarding his death ran contrary to their expectation the prospect repelled them but here Jesus is being reminded that the father's family doesn't just exist on earth here Jesus is being reminded of the full vista of those for whom he will die encompassing not only those on earth and those yet to come into existence but also those who had already passed from this earthly scene and who were awaiting the fulfillment of all that the Messiah would do father's family doesn't just exist amongst those gathered upon earth it exists also in heaven and here from the purity and luster and brilliance of their heavenly abode are brought two of the greatest representatives of the father's family it might seem to be a diminution of their blessedness that they return to this sin polluted earth it might seem to be a diminution of their blessedness that they return to the scene of their former labors their successes and their failures

[11 : 37] Moses to be sure comes to a land where he'd never been before he didn't cross the Jordan and enter the promised land but if their coming to earth had been to resume their former struggles yes they would have been brought low but it's not quite a return to earth here heaven and earth meet tangentially they come and touch each other or without totally intersecting these men don't surrender their heavenly glory the aura of heaven is still around them but they come on a holy and exalted mission they show Christ the intense interest of his church in heaven in the victory and

the triumph he is to effect and they themselves are blessed with a greater understanding of what will be accomplished by the Messiah if the angels desired to look into these things how much more the beneficiaries of those for whom the

Messiah would die and the church the representatives of the church in heaven don't display the misunderstandings of the representatives of the church on earth they don't look askance at what is going to happen rather we are told they spoke of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem and you'll note the margin tells you that the word departure there is literally his exodus we'll come back to that in just a moment that was the theme of the conversation of those who are come from their heavenly abode to speak with the Lord on the mountain his exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem now there are three specific aspects of their presence there with Christ that we ought just to probe a little bit more and first of all let's ask ourselves why these two of all the saints of Old Testament days why Moses and Elijah why wasn't it Abraham friend of God father father of the faithful why wasn't it Daniel a man greatly beloved by God and once you start all sorts of other names come like Job or David why not them and the answer must surely lie in the fact that these two men are not there as individuals they're not there in their personal capacity they're there because of their office because of what they represent they're there as in an official capacity because Moses was the lawgiver who had set up under

God the people of God in Old Testament times and Elijah was the prophet whose ministry had been instrumental under God in checking the downward plunge of the nation the northern kingdom of Israel into utter apostasy so these two men are there because they sum up the former dispensation of God's dealings with his people and these two men had centuries apart been given by God at Sinai a previous vision of the glory of God they had enjoyed a time of divine self disclosure and here it is repeated to them when they see Jesus the son of God garbed in his glory but it was more than that these two illustrious men of the past had also been favored with notable deaths Moses died in the land of

Moab and God buried him in the valley opposite Baal Peor in the land of Moab and no one knows the place of his burial buried by the hand of God and Elijah as you know was translated the chariots of fire and the horses of fire separated him from his companion Elisha and he went up in a whirlwind into heaven and these two men in their offices were forerunners of the Messiah and when one can quite well imagine that part of the discussion about the exodus that the Lord was going to accomplish in fact that he wasn't going to depart as Moses departed buried by the hand of God and no one knew where his tomb was and he wasn't going to depart with signs of visible favour from God in the chariot taking him to heaven translating him there the contrast points up ever more clearly the distinctive and final nature of the mission of the

[17 : 01] Son of God the Son of man but I think that these two men are chosen for yet a deeper reason and for that we look not at their deaths but at their life ministries Moses Moses and Elijah were two men of the covenant who at Sinai had both in their own way pled with God regarding the covenant people at times when they the people had gone astray we looked at Moses at Sinai and Elijah at Sinai and both times it was a period of deadly peril for the people on the one occasion it was the worship of the golden calf and the other occasion it was the worship of Baal and the ministries of Moses and Elijah were closely connected in a very real sense they summed up the preceding history of

God's dealings with his people rescuing them from idolatry rescuing them from rebellion turning them back from the utter folly into which they were plunging themselves and these two men had grappled not just with the sin and the deviance of the people they had grappled theologically with what was going on because they had seen the fundamental underlying enigma in all their dealings and in all God's dealings with his people if God is truly holy how can he forgive the sin of a rebellious people and of course Moses and Elijah tried to argue that through from different angles Moses as the covenant mediator stood between God and the people he recognized the people's need for mercy he pled for God's grace Moses didn't play down their sin but the only way he could see out of the impasse was the even greater reality of

God's mercy and his compassion and he struggled in intercession with God to have the offense wiped out he went so far as to say take my own life if that will make it for atonement if that will satisfy to bring these people back into a true and living relationship with their God and Moses plea was rejected he'd shown himself truly imbued with the spirit of a mediator but his plea was rejected because it failed to square with the demands of justice whoever has sinned against me I will blot out

of my book Moses was emphasizing one angle the reality of divine grace the reality of divine love but his thinking wasn't able to do justice to the totality of divine justice he was looking for the blessing of the gospel but his expedient for dealing with the sentence of the law failed to satisfy and Elijah came at the matter from a different angle same problem but a totally different emphasis we find him and Sinai also at a time when the sin of the people seemed to have brought God's work with them to a dead end they had completely strayed from the path of righteousness they had broken the way of the covenant and Elijah appeared as a prophet and true to his prophetic calling he came as covenant prosecutor demanding that the standards of the law be upheld he knew that his God was holy he knew that his God was righteous he knew that his God could not deny the demands of his justice without destroying himself and Paul interprets for us the scene when Elijah appeared at Sinai Paul in

Romans 11 tells us do you not know what scripture says of Elijah when he appeals to God against Israel Lord they have killed your prophets they have demolished your altars and I alone am left and they seek my life Paul clearly shows Elijah as the covenant prosecutor pleading against Israel he's saying the situation is hopeless he's grasped the truth of God's justice and these people have rejected God they have rejected Elijah his spokesman they have rejected the covenant and the standards of his law they have given gross affront to the majesty of the God of heaven and Elijah appears and enters no plea of mitigating circumstances indeed he almost intensifies their guilt because he contrasts himself with them he says the people of

[22 : 29] Israel have abandoned your covenant and he mentioned in the same breath the fact that he was zealous for the Lord and they were not all that they were and all that they were doing was directed on the path of self destruction because they were only Israel the people favored by the Lord because of the covenant that the Lord himself had instituted and if they turned their back in that covenant they were destroying themselves so Elijah on Sinai grappling with the problem of sin grappling with the problem of the divine reaction to sin comes emphasizing God's revulsion and rejection of all that is contrary to his way and to his will so here are these two men who in their earthly ministries had struggled with the problem of

Israel's sin had struggled with the problem of the affront done to the divine majesty through human disobedience and they've come and they're talking with Christ and they're talking with Christ about his exodus Moses who'd securely grasped one side of the matter divine grace divine love divine forgiveness and Elijah who'd securely grasped the other side of the matter the inflexible demands of the law of God and they're divinely privileged in being brought together in the presence of Christ the one stressing the place of law the other stressing the gospel of acceptance they had not been able Moses or Elijah to reconcile the two they couldn't make justice and grace cohere oh they struggled hard let's not think lightly of them let's not dismiss them they were struggling hard to understand these things and see a way forward they identified the problem they were wrestling with these awesome realities the question of the ages how can the just

God forgive the sinner neither Moses pleading nor Elijah's indictment availed to remedy the situation but there was the answer personified before them in the presence of the son of man and so we can thirdly think of what these men learn from the lips of Christ himself it's the ultimate accolade to the ministry of Moses and to the ministry of Elijah they passed from this earthly life without ever having had made clear to them the full divine solution to the conundrum that they'd struggled with but the full light of God's plan of salvation is here shown to them and their conversation focuses on

Christ and what he was going to do there was no need for either Moses or Elijah to discuss what the problem was they'd known the problem full well it was the solution they wanted to hear about and the solution was then as now all in Christ and in summing up the conversation Luke uses two key words they spoke of his departure exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem exodus and accomplish now the word exodus literally means going out a way out a departure and the word is sometimes used merely of departure from this life as a synonym for the word death but here it's very particularly chosen by

Luke to sum up the testimony of scripture what awaits Christ at Jerusalem is not merely death but a death with significance patterned after the Old Testament event of the exodus which was a movement away from the land of oppression and domination into the land of liberty the glorious land of promise the exodus was a journey from the bondage of Egypt into the glorious liberty of the children of God and exodus has in it an important ingredient because Moses the mediator didn't

make that journey on his own exodus from Egypt was Moses with the people entrusted to him and [28 : 01] Christ's exodus which he accomplishes at Jerusalem is more than his personal departure from the scene of time it points to the whole of his journey his resurrection and his ascension into the heavenly places and to the fact that he goes there as the one who represents others who leads others who bids his people follow him and waits for them in glory we have here in this word exodus a mini theology of what is happening in Jerusalem at the death of Christ it's not the passing away of one but the death of a representative it's not merely his death it is the fact that it is a journey a journey from this world to the world to come a journey from the land of oppression to the new age of liberty and freedom he has gone before and as the leader of this exodus he bids his people follow him here

Moses and Elijah are brought to see that the death of Christ has a significance that far extends beyond their passing from this scene of time even though each Moses both Moses and Elijah in their own way have been granted by God a notable death and it's also which he was about to accomplish a note of fulfillment a note of triumph since the children partake of flesh and blood he partook of the same he came and identified so that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death are subject to lifelong slavery Christ came to accomplish deliverance from bondage of death for those who are under that sentence because of sin there's no doubt about the fact it's going to happen because this mediator isn't dragged to his death by the compulsion of any external force he goes there by the sovereign inclination of his own will diffused by his love for his people he's in control he knows what's going to happen all is taking place according to a definite plan foreknown by

God because God in his wisdom has solved the quandary of the ages it's as if he's saying to Elijah yes Elijah you were zealous for my glory you knew what my law demanded and you knew what an affront it was to me when these people turned their backs in my law and said we'll go our own way you thought only of the penalty that necessarily flows from infringement of the law but I also had in view a deeper ground for my praise and glory in my grace and there that is found in the son of man bearing transgression for the sin of the people bearing the burden of sin not his own Moses saw further into atonement but he couldn't himself do it couldn't himself effect it because he too was a sinner but here they are confronted with son of man son of

God coalesced in the person of Christ and he is the one who is without sin he is the one who can make the perfect offering he is the one who can pay the penalty on behalf of others because there is no penalty he has to pay on behalf of himself he comes as the substitute he comes as the representative he wipe the slate clean more than that he is the one who comes to accomplish an exodus he doesn't just take his people through the red sea and dump them on the other side he leads them through to the land of promise it's not just that he wipes the slate clean there's no longer a negative balance in your account but a great big zero not at all he wipes the account clean and in accomplishing an exodus he has credited to that heavenly bank account of ours the inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading that lies at the end of the journey

Moses and Elijah appear in glory they speak of his exodus they speak of his accomplishment this is the conversation of the saints and glory how much more should it inflame our hearts how much more should we give attention to what the saviour has accomplished so that this day claiming it for ours in faith we can come and remember him at the table of remembrance let us seek to join Moses and Elijah with a focus on Christ the answer to the questions that perplexed and laid them down the answer that is sovereignly approved and leads forward to glory hereafter let us pray Lord we confess that on our own we have fallen fallen far short and are away from thy glory but our hearts this day rise up and praise for

[34 : 25] Jesus the one who accomplished on our behalf what we were utterly unable to do for ourselves increase our faith we pray that we may lay hold ever more securely of the reality accomplished in him bow and bend our wills we pray so that we would no longer be rebellious before him but know the joy of willing submission and following in the way opened up by him into eternal glory cleanse and renew as we pray in his name amen we're now going to sing in psalm 36 at verse 5 psalm 36 verse 5 your steadfast love is great oh lord it reaches heaven high your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky your righteousness is very great and

I've picked up the wrong version I think we better sing it in the 1650 version which was what I did actually tell the presenter I was going to do we're singing it in the 1650 version page 251 psalm 36 at verse 5 thy mercy lord is in the heavens you know it's the same story it hasn't been changed thy

mercy lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains great thy judgments deep as floods verses 5 to 10 in psalm 36 thy mercy lord is in the air like him the reach the heart thy justice is thy promise is thy trust and give us blood as we come to remember our lord's death at the table of remembrance it's our custom to fence the table which is really a way of saying to remind ourselves of who should be there and who should not and to this end could

I direct your attention to words you find in first Corinthians and chapter 5 and verses 7 and 8 cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump as you really are unleavened for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven the leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth we've just been thinking of the exodus of Christ and in old testament times the exodus was preceded by the Passover and as part of the preparations for the Passover the people of God were told to take all leaven out of their houses it was part of the preparation for participating in the salvation that God was going to extend to them and it was of course symbolic the leaven was symbolic as it is spelled out here of malice and evil it was in many respects something that was a corrupting influence and the people of God were being reminded that those who would pledge their truth to the Lord God of heaven those who would come in obedience to him must quit must make an end of having sin dominating in their lives there must be no place left for it due inquiry must be made and due search taken so that it might be identified and removed and Paul here uses this same language in addressing the New Testament church cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump both at the level of church discipline as a whole and also at the level of individual private inquiry and examination the people of

God as they come to celebrate the festival are enjoined to come as those who have looked at themselves not to say that we are perfect not to say that we've arrived far from it but to say that we have a target we have a goal we desire to be like Christ and we will make every endeavor to strive towards the prize for the upward call that is in Christ Jesus this is an endeavor to examine ourselves so that our witness our testimony our lives our acts our thoughts are reshaped and renewed into the likeness of him whom we would serve it is a challenge to our motives it is a challenge to our desires is it the case that having identified the leaven we have cleansed it out we have asked for divine help to separate us from that which separates us from

[40 : 34] God so that we may truly celebrate the festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth oh how glad we are it's not the unleavened bread of perfection that awaits us hereafter it is now of sincerity and truth do you genuinely wish to be like him do you truly say he has bought me and I am his if you say that if you have that hope within you you have the mandate to be here gathered at his table remembering all that he has achieved so as we come to the table and seek to remember our Lord we come as those who say out with the old leaven of malice and evil and we plead with the Lord for his grace to enable us to enjoy the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth may we come with that spirit informing our hearts and our actions as the elements are placed on the table and as any intending communicants who have not yet done so take their places at the table we will sing words from

Psalms 118 beginning at verse 15 Psalm 118 beginning at verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly singing on as is appropriate in dwellings of the righteous oh who tricoon of the powinniu's verse the■■■■ glory O joy I am the Lord's might and love ever again.

The bright and bright, the mighty Lord, the bright and bright, the mighty Lord, the heavenly King. As we gather at the table of remembrance to remember our Lord's death, we are in effect being asked to become travelers in time and to take our thoughts back through the corridors of history, back to a time 2,000 years ago when the Son of God, the Son of Man, was on Earth and met his death.

And when those who are interested in history go back into the past to look at the lives and to review the careers of the great of the past, one thing that they frequently do is to go to the place where they are buried and to look at the inscription there upon the tombs of the dead.

[44 : 57] And if we try that, in the case of our Lord, we have much that leads us into thoughts regarding what we are about just now.

Because we are told in Scripture that in the place where the Lord was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden there was a new tomb, and that there our Lord was buried.

And we see there, firstly, the fact that our Lord was buried in a tomb that was not his own. The Son of Man who had testified foxes of holes, birds of the air of nests, for the Son of Man hasn't a place to lay his head.

He is the one who had to be buried even in a tomb that was borrowed from another. And we are there reminded in looking at that tomb of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor for our sins, so that we, through his poverty, might become rich.

We stand abased before the tomb of the one who gave up so much so that we could have what we don't deserve.

[46 : 19] As we gather there and look at that tomb, we also observe that it was in the garden that was near the place where he was crucified, and that place was outwith the city, outwith the camp, so that even in looking at his tomb, we are reminded that he died the death of the sin-bearer, because it was the bodies of the animals that had been sacrificed for sin that were taken, consigned, outside the camp, outside the city wall, to be burned and destroyed there.

And true to all that our Lord fulfilled, even in his place of burial, he was entombed out with the city, the one who was bearing the curse, not his own, and paying the penalty of sin, not his own.

And this too, we remember. what we also see, and there's the beginning of light breaking in, that it was a new tomb, that it was a tomb that in some senses reflected the fact that in his death there was the breaking in of a new age into this world of darkness and gloom.

And of course, that reminds us of the truly essential fact about the tomb. As the angel said to the women, come see the place where he lay.

It's an empty tomb that we remember. It's an empty tomb that we visit. Not empty because of the depredations of grave robbers.

[48 : 04] Not empty because of the passing of the years and the inevitable moldering of decay. But empty because he is risen. Empty because he has been brought by the power of his father out of the land of darkness into the land of life, never to be touched by death again.

And so today as we come remembering our Lord's death, remembering the one who died on our behalf, and thinking of that tomb that could not hold him, that tomb to which he was consigned but for a brief period, we come remembering the one who bore our sin, the one who ushered in a new age, the one who has risen again and gone to glory.

And as we look back, we rejoice within ourselves that he did all this so that we might live also. with these thoughts in our hearts, let us seek to carry out the mandate that our Lord gave us through the apostle.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

[49 : 46] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Let us follow our Lord's example.

He gave thanks. Lord God, our Father in heaven, provider of every good gift, we give thanks at this time that amongst all the good gifts of thy providence thou didst give thy son to be the sin bearer, to take away the sin and the iniquity of all who would confess their unrighteousness and be cleansed through his shed blood.

We wonder in you at the greatness of thy grace and of thy love. We wonder in you at the greatness of thy loving kindness. And we give thanks for the steadfastness and constancy not only of our Savior in carrying through all that was allotted to him, but in thy continuing mercy and goodness bearing with us as we stumble along the path that is before us.

grant that as we meet at this time around the table of the Lord we might know thy presence with us. Sanctify, we pray, our hearts that we might receive a right these tokens of remembrance and be stirred up within ourselves with a heavenly and holy vision that enables us to see Jesus and him alone, that enables us to see him as the one who took our place and the one who awaits us in glory hereafter.

We are poor and needy, Lord, but we give thanks that thou hast looked on us in mercy, provided for us abundantly, and that thou dost continue to do so.

[51 : 50] Cleanse us, we pray, from all sin and shortcoming. Renew us unto righteousness and enable us to rejoice in heart and soul this day that we are the Lord's and that he is his, he is ours.

In his name receive us and bless. Amen. As we have traveled back in our memories the time of our Lord's death, we are reminded by the text this morning that that death was an exodus, not just something that happened a death at one point, but the beginning of a journey.

And so as we leave the Lord's table, we look not to the starting point of the journey, but to the terminus. And our thoughts are drawn forward to the reality of the risen Lord seated at the right hand, awaiting all those who are his.

It is not in our hands to determine how long or how short our journey in this earth is to be, but of this we are sure. In the Lord we know where we are going, and in the Lord we know that not one of those who trusts in him is lost.

So as we go on our way, let us step out with renewed confidence. Let us step out with confidence not in self, but in the Lord, the good shepherd who will surely guide his people through to the end of the journey he sets before us.

[53 : 37] So often our heart faints and fails. So often we take our eyes off him and stumble. May this time of remembrance, of refocusing upon him enable us to go forward in the pilgrim's way looking to the one who is the forerunner, the trailblazer, who has already gone ahead and who is beckoning us to follow him in his footsteps.

Let us bow our heads and return thanks. Lord God, our Father in heaven, we give thanks this day for all privileges that are ours.

We praise thee as the God of salvation, Father who planned from all eternity, Son who in the fullness of time came to deliver, and Holy Spirit who continually makes efficacious the message of the truth in our hearts and lives, gives strength to walk on the pilgrim way and to resist the allure of this world and move forward in holiness.

We give thanks for all that is ours in Christ and pray that thou wouldst enable us not to be ashamed of our Lord and of all that he has done in the midst of this adulterous and sinful generation.

Grant that individually and collectively we may maintain a witness to his truth that honors his name and that enables us to move forward, glorying in the one who has bought us.

[55 : 22] O Lord our God, forgive our frailty, overlook our sin, renew us unto righteousness, and take not the joy of thy salvation promise, that now we may be practicing for that joy that will be complete hereafter.

In Jesus' name, Amen.