

It was good for us to be here

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[0 : 0 0] Will you turn with me now to the Gospel of Christ by Matthew and chapter 17. This in fact is a chapter I intended to read from and not chapter 19 as you would probably have noticed.

Chapter 17 and words we have in verse 8. Matthew 17 verse 8 and when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man save Jesus only.

The Matthew's account of course of the transfiguration. One very significant thing about the account which the three evangelists give us of the transfiguration is how the accounts are so close in detail.

There are details, important details, mentioned by some which are not mentioned by others. But the main gist of the incident is given by the three evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke.

And of course it was a very significant event as every event in our Lord's history was significant. It was an event that was pointing in one direction only.

[1 : 3 5] That is the direction of the cross. It was what was going to happen that was discussed as we see in the accounts which the evangelists gave to us for us to happen on Calvary.

And it was part, we believe, of our Lord's teaching of his followers. In different ways he was teaching them concerning himself and concerning his work.

But we know how difficult they found it to accept and to believe what was going to happen to him. They didn't expect a Messiah who would suffer and die.

They had their prejudices. They had grown up with them. They had imbibed them in the course of their early teachings. They had wrong teachings concerning the prophecies of their own scriptures, the Old Testament.

And it was very difficult for them to change, to have their mind changed. And yet we find over and over again that our Lord is pointing very clearly in the direction of the cross and of his own sufferings and death.

[2 : 5 2] And yet his followers on the whole, they were very slow to learn what he had to relate to them. On this singular occasion itself, where three of them were permitted to listen to a most remarkable dialogue between Jesus and Moses and Elias.

We read in Mark chapter 9 that after coming down from the mount they questioned one with one another what the rising from the dead should mean.

They were still unable to grasp and still unable to understand what was being taught them. And yet so patiently our Lord continued his teaching of them.

Now then I want us to look for a little this evening together at some of the saian figures of the teachings we have here. What they said and what they heard and what these men saw.

First of all, first of all, first of all, what these men said in connection with this event. And we have it in these words, it is good for us to be here.

[4 : 0 8] They reckoned that it was an experience that was well worthwhile. And so it was. I have no doubt that they came to this conclusion from what they listened to, what they saw and what they learned.

Although they were slow to understand. It was good for them to be there. You see, it is always good to be in good company. There is no better place to be in than in a place where God's name is honoured and where his people gather.

And where the gospel of his grace is proclaimed. For one thing, it was good for them to be there because of the company they are assembled.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Some of those representing the church in heaven.

And some representing the church militant, the church still in the world. Moses as a representative of the law. Elias as a representative of the prophets.

[5 : 1 5] So we have the Old Testament church. We have the New Testament church. And we have the Lord of the church himself gathered in that place. It was indeed a singular gathering.

There had been no such gathering before in the world. And there will, it is unlikely, that there will be any other after this. The company was a singular one for those who were there from the church triumphant.

They were as interested as the disciples themselves of all that was going on. So it was particularly good for them to have been there because of who were with them, those who were with them, and the persons they were seeing.

But then it was also particularly good for them to be there, no doubt, because of the theme which was discussed there. We read that in Luke, that they spoke, that Jesus spoke to Moses and Elias of the decease which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.

Now then, generally speaking, men don't speak of death as something to be accomplished. Men think of death as something that prevents them from accomplishing something they want to accomplish in this world.

[6 : 5 1] This points us to something altogether unique in the history and the ministry of our Lord, namely that his decease or his death was the principal thing which he had to accomplish.

It was that which he came to undertake. It wasn't so much his miracles and his teachings and other things. He came in order to give his life a ransom for many.

Over and over again, this was something which he had to drive home to the minds of his followers. That he was accomplishing something that had been given him to do.

That their salvation hinged on his accomplishment of that event. And so, the very fact that he was there discussing his death with Moses and Elias points out to us the singularity of that event in itself.

And that it was the most significant one in the entire range of his ministry. This was one other reason, although they were yet failing to fully understand and fully grasp it.

[8 : 0 8] It was one of the reasons why it was good for them to be there. It's always good for us, my friends, as Christian believers, to hear of the death, the sufferings, the passion and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because there we see the evidence, the supreme evidence of his love for us. It was good for them because of the theme there discussed.

But I no doubt that it was good for them also because of the glory which was there manifested. We read in the accounts we have in the Gospels. We read that not only did our Lord's garments shine, but his very features were changed.

He was transfigured before them. The form of his countenance was changed. It is difficult for us to appreciate. It is impossible, I believe, for us to appreciate what that means, what the significance of that is.

But we certainly have to believe this, that his divinity shone forth on the mount in a way that it didn't shine forth on other occasions.

[9 : 36] The glare of his glory as God, it gripped the minds and the hearts of these men so that they were physically overcome by the glory of what they saw.

The glory of Christ, not only as man, but principally the glory of Christ as God, was appeared to their eyes so that they were quite overcome, physically, emotionally overcome by what they saw.

And yet, the conclusion was that it was good for them to have been there. Peter, writing many years afterwards, he makes reference, you remember, to being with him on the holy mount.

It was an experience that he would never forget. And when any Christian, any believer, when he meets with Christ and is unable to embrace Jesus Christ as his own Saviour and Lord, he sees a glory in him that he has never seen before, that after all is what brings men and women who are sinners to a commitment of themselves to him.

They have seen his glory as God and as man, as Saviour and as mediator. It was good for them to be there because of the glory there manifested.

[11 : 10] And the just too was good for them to be there because of the lessons which they learned there. Lessons which they would continue to learn after this.

And I believe it would be after this that the lessons would be fully appreciated. That they would see and understand and be able to embrace those things which they had heard.

They would remain with them and they would see how marvelously everything was fulfilled in the fullness of God's time as their beloved Lord and Master went to the cross.

We learn no lessons very slowly. My friends, let us not at times if we sit in God's house and feel that we have gleaned nothing and go away feeling despondent and depressed.

Let us not feel that way at all. Therefore, God by his spirit teaches us slowly and surely and perhaps afterwards, many days afterwards that the things, some of the things we heard in past months and years will come home to us with special power and will be a means of instruction and blessing to us.

[12 : 30] So it was, it is good for us to be here. Let us seek in our own particular environment in the experiences through which we pass under the hand of God.

Let us be able, pray that we may be able to use these words as God graciously and patiently takes us in hand, teaches us, speaks to us, comforts us, shows us the way in which we should live to his glory and to his honour.

It is good for us to be here. What these men said. The next, second principle thing I want to leave with you is what these men heard.

They heard, we read, a voice from heaven. This, saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Hear him.

A voice from heaven. Hebrew, the letter to the Hebrews, you remember, it commences, on the note that God who hath sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time passed unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son.

[13 : 43] This is an expression that was used earlier in our Lord's ministry, as you remember, at his baptism. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Hear him.

What are we to understand then from these words? What is the essence of this message? Well, for one thing, it is very clear that the message says that he was God's special envoy.

And God intended his people to recognize him and accept him as his special envoy. The prophets had spoken of him in this regard.

They had made reference to God's elect servant. This was undoubtedly the Messiah who was to come. God had many servants, many envoys in the course of history, but never had he an envoy comparable to the envoy who was now in the world, who was performing a ministry which no other servant ever performed, and no servant after him would be required to perform.

He was God's special envoy in time to perform a special and a particular ministry in the world. And this is the way that we must always think of him.

[15 : 02] He was supremely God's servant, the Father's elect servant. Behold my servant, he says through the prophet Isaiah.

Behold my beloved son, he says here through his New Testament church. He is my special envoy, he is one who is set apart by me to perform a particular unique ministry.

But then the message also was saying not only that he was God's special envoy, I believe that he was uniquely loved of God, my beloved son.

Now of course God has had many sons and many daughters in the world, he still has, whom he loves, and whom he loves supremely.

We can say that of every child of God, everyone wrought upon by God's spirit, every man, every woman, every child adopted into God's family, they are supremely loved of God.

[16 : 11] I have loved thee with an everlasting love. There is no sense in which we can say that any of the children of men are loved in a unique sense, but the son was loved.

He was with them, as we mentioned in the morning, one brought up with them, daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. He is my beloved son.

And that is a message that comes home to ourselves, or ought to come home to ourselves every time we discuss the gospel and our Lord's ministry in the world, and the relationship in which he stood to his own father.

And he was uniquely loved often because he was not only a servant, but his son. But the message also, I believe, conveys yet another lesson, and that is that he was supremely pleasing to God, in whom I am well pleased.

Of course he was well pleasing to God. How could he be otherwise? He was well pleasing to God because as a beautiful son, he was performing the complete pleasure and delight of his father.

[17 : 32] He was fulfilling all that the father had committed into his care. He was finishing the work with supreme delight which the father had given to him.

And so he couldn't be anything else but pleasing to God. However carefully you and I may walk in the course of life, and we ought of course to walk carefully and diligently and devotedly and loyally as God's children.

Yet however closely we may walk to the standards which God sets before us in his word, we fall short, do we not? We are conscious of it. We sin in our lives, we sin in our hearts, and so we cannot be supremely pleasing to him so far as we are in ourselves.

But here is the glory of the gospel. we are supremely pleasing to him when he looks upon us in his own beloved son. That is our hope, that is our own confidence, that must be our joy and our happiness at all times.

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And of course also the message has another lesson for us, and that is that he carried an outstanding message from God.

[18 : 56] Otherwise they wouldn't be told hear him. He is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. You are to hear him. You are to hear what he says.

You are to hear what he does. You are to hear him in his miracles. You are to hear him in his words. You are to hear him in his actions. You are to hear him in his sufferings and his death.

What is the message that he conveys to you? Hear him, says God. Because he carries an outstanding message from God. And the message of course is a message of reconciliation.

We are ambassadors for Christ. As though God did besiege you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead. Be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin.

God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin. so that we made the righteousness of God in him. This is heaven's message spoken through the sufferings and through the death of his own son.

[20 : 00] This is the outstanding message that God has sent by his son into the world and to his people. And so you see, my dear friends, what these men heard and what gave them such gladness is what we hear when we sit under the ministry of God's word.

The very things, the very lessons that they should have been able to draw from what they saw and what they heard and the very messages and the very lessons that we ought to draw from these teachings as well.

And so let us take heed, as scripture says, how we hear. We tend, do we not, to be negligent hearers. We tend to listen and get to allow the words to pass over us.

We are to take heed how we hear, as we have taken heed what we hear. What these men said, it is good for us to be here. What these men heard, a voice from heaven.

And that is what we hear when we are confronted again and again with the word of God and with the gospel of his grace.

[21 : 17] The third principle thing I want to mention this evening is what these men saw. They saw, we read, no man save Jesus only.

They saw no man save Jesus only. And you see, this is what, this is what mattered. mattered. This is what mattered supremely.

This, if you like, is this, if you like, is the Christian experience. This is what they experience in their own hearts and in their own lives.

This is what Christian men and women experience when they see Jesus and when they are able by grace to relate him to themselves as their savior and as their lord.

This is what we are called upon to see, to see Jesus only. And when we have seen Jesus and when we have been able to see him with the eye of faith, then we see all that is needful for sinners to see in this world.

[22 : 34] They saw Jesus only. If we can think of some of the incidents we have in the Gospels, this is precisely, I believe, what is brought before us.

This is the one, for instance, whom the apostles saw in the upper room. After this, you remember the account we have of the upper room, where our Lord gathered his little band of followers around him for the last time before he went to the cross and before he went to Gethsemane.

He was at the very centre. He was projecting himself as he had every right to do. And in those great 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of John's Gospel, we have principally the projection which he made of himself in relation to his people.

There you have, if you like, the first pre- and post-communion table address that was ever given in his word. And Jesus is speaking, and Jesus is presenting himself to his people, to his disciples, to his apostles.

And it was Jesus only with themselves that these men saw when they were gathered there in the upper room. This is the one whom they saw there.

[24 : 07] And this is the one whom the two disciples saw, you remember, on the Emmaus throne, after his resurrection. Again, we have the account of this in Luke chapter 24.

They were on their way to Emmaus, they were walking, they were sad, and then a third person came along, joined himself to them, and asked them, what is the reason, what is the cause of their sadness? And they related to him what had happened.

And then, you remember, he took matters into his own hands. He gently, but firmly rebuked them, fools and slow of heart, to understand all that the prophets had spoken.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at most, at all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself, and the sequel of all this was, on their own confession, did not our hearts burn within us, as he spoke to us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures.

He had projected himself, as he had every right to do, and they had eyes for no one else, as they went happily and joyfully on their way to him, getting lighter of fruit all the time, as he spoke to them by way, they saw Jesus only with themselves.

[25 : 33] This also was the one who Mary Mantlin saw outside the sepulcher, you remember, imagining at first that he was the gardener, but then when he mentioned her by name, immediately there was an answer, a response from her own heart, praboni, master, her heart was filled to overflowing with expectation, with anticipation and love and joy, she saw no man, she thought of nothing at that moment save that Jesus was before her, in all his glory, and in all his beauty, and in all his suitableness, and this was the one whom Thomas saw, you remember, doubting Thomas, oh when Jesus appeared a second time to his apostles, the first time Thomas wasn't there, and no one would convince him that Jesus was risen, until he had a personal experience of the love and the grace of his saviour, and when he had, his exclamation was, my Lord, and my God,

Jesus only with himself, you see, this is what always counts in Christian experience, when we are able to come to this point, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, in our minds, and in our hearts, when we see something of the glory of Christ, shining through the word, and shining through his gospel, and shining through his finished work, heart, then we cannot but see something of the wonder of that sight, and we shall see Jesus only, nothing else matters but this.

This, my friends, is of supreme importance for ourselves, not just in, not just in connection with our faith, with what we believe, it is important for us to see Jesus in all the events of life and of living, and to know, to believe, that he is in all the events of life and of living.

Nothing is out with his superintending power and grace in what happens to us, and it is when we fail to see Jesus only in inscrutable and bewildering events that we become downcast and depressed and despondent and almost despair.

But when by the grace of God we see Jesus only in those perplexing happenings that may cross and will cross the path of any one of us, then we shall be able to stand in the day of evil and the day of testing.

[28 : 36] And it is also important that we see Jesus in all the means and in all the ways of grace, that we seek to see him in the proclamation of his word, in the reading of his word, in the exposition of his word, in the singing of his praises, and in whatever we do whatever privileges we enjoy, in and through the means of grace, to get a fair view of the glory of Christ, of the suitableness of Christ for our particular need.

You see, we come each day of the week, surely, to the house of God without individual problems and burdens. there is no place where those can be so perfectly resolved as at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus only, with ourselves in the circumstances in which we find ourselves anywhere, at any time, in life and in living.

well, my dear friends, I leave with you these beautiful words and the events which we have delineated for us in the account which scripture gives of the transfiguration.

and as we examine and look into this account for ourselves in the privacy of our own homes, then I have no doubt at all that we shall find much to rejoice our hearts and strengthen our faith and enable us to continue in the way in which he has placed us.

[30 : 23] Amen, and may God add his blessing to our meditation in his word. Shall we pray? Almighty and eternal God, we thank thee anew this evening that thou hast allowed us to gather together in the fellowship of this place, and we thank thee for thy word which we have had before us, and for the graciousness with which thou hast spoken in that word, and we pray, O God, that thou wouldst make application of thy truth to the minds and the hearts of each one of us now.

As we go from this place, may we carry thy word with us and its message, may we be able to think upon it, and may we be given to put it into practice, and to live it before men.

Bless us each one, and make us a blessing, grant that we may be thy witnesses wherever we are, and show forth the praises of the God who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, and to thee we would give all praise, all honour and glory, now and forever.

Amen.