**THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS** January 25, 2014

Luke 9:28-36 / Key Verse 9:29

“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”

A couple of weeks ago, I watched a movie entitled “the Climb.” There were two main characters in the movie. The person A-Derrick William was a kind of person pursuing his own success, fame, and recognition from people. The person B-Michael Harris was a man pursing God’s will ahead of anything else. Two climbers made a success together in the climbing of one of the highest mountain in South America; Chicanagua in Chile but when they were coming down from the top, Harris saw Derrick encountered a great danger. So he threw the life-saving rope toward Derrick with a loud shout and with the help of the rope he could be rescued but unfortunately Harris who threw the rope was covered by snows and died. Derrick frequently got angry to Harris thinking that he was too cautious. But when he realized that he was saved because of his friend’s willing sacrifice, he was moved by his act of true love and later he accepted Jesus whom his friend believed. After watching this movie, one word of God came to my heart; John 15:13, “There is no greater love than this that he lay down his life for his friends.” How to live your current life is determined by what hope you have. If you have true resurrection faith and hope, you can live most beautiful and glorious life willing to sacrifice your life to save others’ life because you can overcome the fear of death. If you have no resurrection faith and hope, you cannot but live as a slave of fear; fear of failure, fear of peer pressure, fear of death, and fear of punishment, etc.

Today Jesus shows his transfigured appearance and clothes. According to Matthew 17:2, his face shone like the sun and in Luke 9:29, his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. This is the preview of his glorious resurrection. Jesus showed this in order to plant the faith and hope of resurrection to the disciples by engraving his glorious image into their hearts. Jesus wants us also to see his glorious image and live life with resurrection faith and hope. I pray that God may open your spiritual eyes and help you see his glorious image and willingly participate in suffering with Christ to gain glory with Christ. Amen.

Look at verse 28. “About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.” After Jesus had told about his suffering, death and resurrection and how to follow Jesus, 8 days passed. For these 8 days, we can imagine how the atmosphere of the disciples was. Before Jesus told about these, the atmosphere must have been good with the great hope in Jesus. But suddenly from the day Jesus began to teach his suffering, death, and resurrection, their atmosphere became serious and heavy. No one talked much nor asked much to Jesus. All the disciples’ hearts were troubled because they didn’t like even to think about suffering and death. Jesus knew this very well. Jesus knew that they needed more help to accept his suffering, death, and resurrection. So Jesus took 3 disciples among 12 and went up to a mountain to pray.

Look at verse 29. “As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.” According to prophet Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 53:2, Jesus had no beauty or majesty to attract people to him. He had nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He looked very ordinary with ordinary clothes except his powerful word. But this is not original image of Jesus Christ. In origin, he is the Creator God who was even before all creation of the world. He is the Creator God who created all universe and billions of people and you and me in such a wonderful and fearful way. Hebrew 1:3 says about Jesus, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” Now Jesus’ face changed like the shining sun and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. This is one picture of his original glory and he would return to his original glory later after his death on the cross. Jesus showed his glorious transfiguration here temporally to show the preview of his eternal original glory. The purpose was to plant his glorious image into their hearts so that they might understand the meaning and purpose of his suffering and death later. When we see the whole picture of Jesus’ suffering, death, and glorious resurrection and we see his suffering and death from his glorious resurrection perspective, we can fully understand the meaning of his suffering and death. Jesus wanted to help the disciple to know this.

Look at verses 30 & 31. “Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.” Moses and Elijah were the most representative two figures in Old Testament whom all people in Israel had highly respected. Moses was Law-giver including 10 Commandments and Elijah was the representative prophet who helped God’s people to return to God in spiritually most difficult time. Both of them suffered a lot to obey God and serve God’s people but now they appeared in glorious splendor. This fact shows that their suffering for God was not in vain. Rather it was the way to bring them to true eternal glory in God. These two men’s life also supports that Jesus’ teaching about suffering, death, and resurrection is trustworthy truth and thus should be accepted by anyone. They spoke about Jesus’ departure implying his death but when they spoke about his death, they used two very meaningful words; departure and fulfillment. These two words teaches us that Jesus’ death is not mere end of his life but departure which means moving from one place to another; from this world to heaven where is full of God’s glory and his death is also the fulfillment of all the Law and prophets of all Old Testament; the fulfillment of God’s mission to save the world. Our personal death in Christ is also not tragic end but glorious departure moving to far better place where is full of God’s glory and also fulfillment of God’s mission entrusted in our life. Therefore, we don’t need to be afraid of death and any kind of elements of death; fear and disappointment and despair etc. Instead we should look forward to seeing glorious Jesus face to face after passing through the gate of death. Then as Hymn 279 sings, one glimpse of his face will erase all our sorrows and pain that we have ever had in this world.

Look at verses 32 & 33. “Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what he was saying.)” After Peter and the other 2 disciples climbed a mountain with Jesus and while Jesus was praying there, initially they fell into sleep because they were very sleepy but after a while when they became fully awake, they saw gloriously transfigured Jesus whom they had never seen nor imagined before and in addition, they also saw Moses and Elijah were standing with him in glorious splendor. Instantaneously they might have thought, “Wow, where are we now? Is here not heaven?” They saw just one glimpse of heavenly picture for a short time but they could not but be captured completely by this glorious image. So like a daydreaming boy, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Though he did not mention outwardly, he said to himself inwardly, “One for me, too.” Peter’s suggestion reveals how much he loves glory without suffering. We are not different from him, either. All fallen men love glory without suffering; glory without repenting; glory without self-denial. But it never works in that way. The glory God prepared in Christ for us is not meant to be received in that way. The kingdom of God is not the place for escaper but overcomer. So in verse 32 bracket, the author commented, “He did not know what he was saying.” Peter including the other disciples still needed more help to accept what Jesus had taught.

Look at verses 34 - 36. “While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.’ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.” This time, God the Father himself appeared in a cloud to help the disciples. Here cloud symbolizes the presence of God and his glory. When God appeared to the Israelites in the time of Old Testament, he always appeared in a cloud. The disciples were afraid as the cloud suddenly enveloped them and they entered the cloud. While they were afraid, a voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son whom I have chosen; listen to him.’ When the voice had spoken, they found that there were no more Moses and Elijah but Jesus was alone. At this voice, they could know that it was Jesus whom they must listen to. Since they heard from Jesus about his suffering, death, and resurrection, they did not like to listen to this story. And Jesus knew why the disciples were afraid to listen to this story. It was because they did not believe Jesus’ glorious resurrection. When they did not believe Jesus’ glorious resurrection, they could not understand the meaning and purpose of his suffering and death, either. When they did not understand the meaning of his suffering and death, they just wanted to avoid hearing these stuffs. So at this time, God the Father himself appeared to help them directly. God clearly said. “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” After hearing this voice, they kept this to themselves not telling to anyone about what they had seen. It was awesome and magnificent experience and they could not forget this glorious image and the voice. In Peter 1:16-18, when Peter was old and almost near to his death, he shared this story, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.” This confession reveals that Peter was greatly influenced by this heavenly voice and glorious image of Jesus and remembered the glory of transfigured Jesus throughout his whole life time and this was the source of powerful witness life participating in Jesus’ suffering and death joyfully and boldly.

In today’s passage, we learn that it is very important to see the glory of transfigured Jesus. Beholding the glory of transfigured Jesus directly impacts our present life and transforms us into his likeness with ever-increasing glory which comes from risen Jesus. In our present life, how can we live life-giving sacrificial life in such selfish and materialistic generation? It is only when we behold the glory of transfigured Jesus Christ with resurrection faith and hope in our heart.

As we know, Dr. Henry Kim’s single dream was always to become like Einstein to gain honor and glory as a mathematician. But when he met risen Christ and have glorious image of risen Jesus in his heart, his value system was completely changed. Instead of pursuing his own worldly honor and glory, he has humbly participated in serving campus students in Christ for 25 years until now with the single hope of sharing Jesus’ glory in heaven. Because of this, we see Jesus’ shepherd image in him and such glorious image will be even more increased as he continues to participate in Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection to the end.

Our young students are pressed and stressed by school study load, anxiety for future job and security, and loneliness and also they are tempted by worldly pleasure and sexual immorality through internet images. Spiritually they are like Derrick William who met a great danger in the movie that I mentioned. They need a good friend who is willing to sacrifice his own life to guide them and eventually save their life. Who can live such life? Only those who believe glorious resurrection in risen Jesus can live such life. Jesus himself is our best friend who laid down his own life to rescue us from eternal danger. When we believe in Jesus, we also can live the life that Jesus had lived. I pray that God may bless all of us to see the glorious image of transfigured Jesus and willingly participate in Jesus’ suffering and death for life-saving in our generation. Amen.