Deuteronomy 34:1–12

**Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4And the Lord said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” 5So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, 6and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. 7Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. 8And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.**

**9And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. 10And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 12and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.**

Hebrews 3:1–6

**Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. 3For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.**

Luke 9:28-36

**Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. 34As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen -36to him!” 36And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.**

Things That end and things that don’t.

Sometimes we think something is never going to end.

Sometimes, it’s something small, like waiting in traffic or waiting for a cold to go away, and feeling as if the waiting will never end. Then sometimes, it’s something more serious, like struggling with depression and feeling the cloud will never lift, or missing a loved one and feeling as if the loneliness will never go away. Sometimes, we ourselves are the source of our weariness, as we see ourselves falling into the same sinful patterns as before and begin to feel our struggle against sin will never end.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus has a message for us about things that will end and things that will not end.

We need to note the setting of our Gospel. You see it starts with these words, **“Now about eight days after these sayings.”** This naturally makes us wonder what had been said eight days earlier.

About eight days before the transfiguration, Jesus had asked his disciples, **“Who do you say that I am?”** Peter had responded with the great confession that Jesus is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah.

We remember how great that sounded, as the disciples must have, but what Jesus said next must have sounded anything but good to the disciples. Jesus said, **“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”**  That was a lot for the disciples to take in! Being raised must have sounded mysterious at the time, but the part about being killed was all too clear.

And they’d barely had time to begin digesting that message about what lay ahead for Jesus when He followed it up with some difficult words about what lay ahead for them. Jesus said**: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”**  That was what lay ahead for these men. Their Messiah would be killed, and they would have lives of daily cross-bearing, which means daily dying.

Now, that was a sobering message. Was that really what all this was leading up to? Were cross-bearing and dying all Jesus and they had to look forward to?

With that background, let’s move to the events of today’s Gospel.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on a mountain to pray. And what they see there is like nothing they’ve seen before. Jesus is transfigured (meaning His appearance changes). His clothes become dazzling white, and even the appearance of His face changes. Matthew’s account tells us that Jesus’ face “shone like the sun.” And there with Jesus are Moses and Elijah, two great heroes of the faith from centuries past.

So, what is the significance of all this? Jesus is giving His disciples a much-needed lesson in things that will last and things that will not last.

This revelation of Jesus in His divine glory is an affirmation for the disciples that, just as Peter had confessed eight days earlier, Jesus truly is the Christ, the Promised One. To leave no doubt that this was the case, God the Father said on the mountain, **“This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”**

The disciples really needed that message at this time, so they can know that suffering and death will not be the end for Jesus. This one who will suffer and die is the Son of the living God, and death cannot hold Him. As the disciples are seeing with their own eyes, Jesus is the light of the world, the light that the darkness cannot overcome. Yes, He will suffer and die. But suffering and death cannot and will not be the end for this one who now stands before them radiant in divine majesty.

Nor will cross-bearing and death be the end for Jesus’ disciples. The living presence of Moses and Elijah on the mountain testifies to the glorious future that awaits all who abide in the faith. Moses had gone through a great deal in his life. And few prophets had experienced more opposition than Elijah. But that hardship had not lasted. What had lasted was their fellowship with the living Lord. Moses and Elijah had passed through the temporary trials of this life into eternal joys at God’s right hand.

And so it is for all who believe. As the disciple see Moses and Elijah, they must realize suffering is not the end for those who trust in the Lord. Instead, a crown of life awaits.

Does that promise of glory mean, though, that the cross-bearing can somehow be skipped over? Just as we might sometimes wish we could follow Jesus without taking up our crosses, Peter also seems to have hoped along those lines, as he offered to build tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah so they could all stay on the mountain.

Peter’s wish is understandable. As he said, it was good for them to be there. But Jesus had something even better in mind. He was set on gaining for Peter, James, John, and us not a moment or day of glory but joys unending.

Luke tells us that, on the mountain, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus **“of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”**  It was for that “departure” that Jesus went back down the mountain.

Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration with his disciples so that He could be lifted up for them (and us!) on Mount Calvary. There, He suffered for us so that our suffering will not last. He died on the cross for our sins, so that sin and death will not be the end for us. And He rose from the dead to proclaim the good news that He has made the way for us through death into life eternal.

As glorious as the transfiguration was, that day’s temporary glory was a sign pointing ahead to greater glory, as in the transfiguration, we see a preview of the unending glory Christ secured for us on the cross.

At times, it might seem as if the hardships of this fallen world will never end. And our Lord Jesus Christ, who has suffered with us and for us, knows what that feels like.

But as they say, take heart. The Lord who accompanied His disciples back down the Mount of Transfiguration into the sin-filled, chaotic messiness of this world will also be with you in whatever hardships you face. And the Lord who was lifted up on Mount Calvary for you has, by His death and resurrection, ensured that those hardships won’t last. They will come to an end and be replaced by everlasting peace and joy in His kingdom that knows no end. Amen.