

## Witnessed by Disciples – Teaching Notes

(Matthew 17:1-12; 2/21/10)

**Introduction:** A key idea in today's lesson is Jesus is transfigured before His inner circle, but He charges them to follow His timetable. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to trust God's mysterious plans and instructions, even when we don't understand them fully.

### **Body:**

#### **Read Matthew 17:1-4**

**I. Surprised Disciples.** Jesus takes His inner circle up a mountain. There, Jesus is transfigured (i.e., bright face and cloths). Moses and Elias (the same as Elijah) appeared and talked with Jesus. Peter, not knowing what to say, talked about setting up tents or tabernacles for Jesus and His two guests.

#### **Applications –**

- **The inner circle.** Notice in vss. 1-2 that Jesus took His inner circle disciples with Him on special assignments. Leaders need people around them whom they can trust with special assignments. First, these seats should be held by those who are most faithful, not necessarily popular or have seniority. Second, if you are not in the inner circle, pray for the leader and his/her inner circle, because we are in this thing together. Think of the cooperation needed among the pilot, co-pilot, and crew, in order for the plane full of passengers to have safe travel. Third, if you are in the inner circle, remember that too whom much is given, much is required. Peter's big mouth appears to be even bigger because of his closeness to Jesus. In like manner, when you are in a trusted position, your short comings are often magnified. Being an inner circle disciple calls for both excellence in work and discipleship in character. Discipleship includes learning to control our mouths. *Let's trust God with inner circle disciple issues.*

- **God's mysterious actions.** Notice in vss. 2-3 that God works in mysterious ways. We don't have a clear explanation for why Jesus' face and cloths were made to be so bright. We speculate when we say that it was a symbolic preview of the glory that He would have, when He gets back to the right side of the Father. As for the appearing of Moses and Elias, it makes sense that these men were chosen as symbols of the law and prophetic literature, the Old Testament. What is clearly beyond vague explanations is that God works in mysterious ways. We don't know what God is going to do, how He is going to do, and where He is going to do. *Let's work on trusting God, even when He moves in mysterious ways.* Prayerful study and obedience with the support of other believers can help us with our faith development. We make a grave error, when we assume that God will always make sense to us.

#### **Read Matthew 17:5-8**

**II. Fearful Disciples.** A cloud came and overshadowed them. From the cloud came a voice that declared Jesus was His Son. The disciples were terrified and fell on their faces. Jesus sought to comfort them. When the disciples looked up, Jesus was alone.

#### **Applications –**

- **Demonstrated appreciation for Jesus.** Notice in vs. 5 that the Father declares that Jesus is His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased, and Jesus is to be heard and obeyed. The Father did not say this of Moses nor Elias. First, it is important to let people know that you are pleased with them, while they can hear you, and often so that other can hear as well. Too often, we wait until someone dies to talk about how much we love them. Or

we can be guilty of being private supporters, instead of public supporters. Second, Jesus out ranks Moses and Elijah. As Christians strive to work with other faiths in community work and tolerate others in co-existing, we should make sure that we remember that Jesus is in a category all by Himself. Third, to really understand the uniqueness of God we should lean to our hearing and obeying His teachings in the Bible. *Let's work on demonstrating our appreciation and living like we know who Jesus is.*

- **Faith over fear.** Notice in vss. 6-8 that Jesus comforted His fearful disciples. First, as in the text, some things can come at us so fast that we find ourselves tempted to be afraid. The emergency call in the middle of the night, bad news from the doctor, or being terminated from our job can catch us off guard. Second, God's love for us is bigger than whatever we are afraid of. There is nothing too hard for God. Third, as in the text, the path to moving beyond fear is faithful action. Trusting God enough to obey Him, even though fear is still present, is often the quickest path to move past fear having control over us. In other words, conquer fear with faith based action. *Let's work on being controlled by our faith in God more than our fear in circumstances.*

### **Read Matthew 17:9-12**

**III. Curious Disciples.** Jesus and His inner circle disciples were making their way down the mountain. Jesus charged them not to tell anyone what happened, until after His resurrection. There is a question and response about the coming of Elias. John the Baptist was a fulfillment of the prophesy.

Applications –

- **God's timing.** Notice in vss. 9-12 that God has a timetable. It was a time to talk about the transfiguration and a time to keep quiet about it. It was a time for Jesus to go from place to place, a time for Him to be crucified, and a time for Him to be resurrected. *Let's strive to live in accord with God's timetable.* This means we should not think that we will always have sunshine and no rain. We should not think that we will always have mountain tops and no valleys. And then when we can, we should strive to make change a process. Sometimes making change a process can make it a more manageable situation.

- **God's use of people.** Notice in vs. 11-12 that John the Baptist was an Elijah/Elias like figure. That is, they both had a prophetic and forerunning ministry. The Jews did not understand the role of the John the Baptist. *Let's be careful how we treat people.* We never know what God is doing or will do in the lives of those around us. When we treat everybody right, we will have nothing to worry about.

**Conclusion:** Let's work on trusting God's mysterious plans and instructions, even when we don't understand them fully. God has much for those who obey His will.