

“And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.””

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

With all the excitement and expectation of the Winter Olympics taking place right now, it may be hard to remember that last Sunday was the week nicknamed by sports commentators as “Super Sunday”. It took 18 weeks, not counting the preseason and post-season games before that “Super Sunday”, when the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots to win the Vince Lombardi trophy in Super Bowl LX. This year’s game drew in 124.9 million viewers, making it the second most-watched show in US history, behind Super Bowl LIX. As in any athletic contest, one team will bask in the glory that victory brings. The other team, as good old Charlie Brown used to say, will go home the goat—and in this case, that doesn’t mean the “greatest of all time”. Fans, too, will see themselves sharing in the victory—or in the agony of defeat. This day will mean worldly glory for some, but not for all.

If you are a real sports enthusiast, you may remember some, or even all, of the previous Super Bowl winners. Some of the winners will be remembered by a generation or two, but we know that worldly glory is fleeting. It does not last. Earthly glory at its best will always be something that fades into oblivion.

While we don’t actually know what day of the week Jesus stood on that mountaintop and revealed His true glory to Peter, James and John, let’s assume for a moment it was a Sunday. Now *that* truly would have been a Super Sunday, as the Lord of Life reveals His divine majesty to those disciples. This glory that does not come from doing something or winning something that brings earthly prestige, but it is a glory that is the very essence of who Jesus truly is. It is the glory that was hidden in human flesh and blood, but which was revealed in the miracles that Jesus performed. It is the glory that shone so brightly on that mountaintop. It is the glory that is revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it is a glory that will be revealed to all mankind on the day of judgement when, as Scripture tells us: *“the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.”* (Matthew 16:27, ESV)

There is another wonderful promise of glory that God makes known to us. St. Paul tells us: *“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”* (Colossians 3:4, ESV) By the grace and mercy of God, we, through faith, will share in this glory, a glory that Peter assures us is *“the unfading crown of glory.”* (1 Peter 5:4, ESV) How blessed we are that the glory that we have in Christ is not fleeting like the glory of winning the Super Bowl. It is not a self-declared glory like that a fan may have when his team wins. This is a glory that will be ours forever through the glorious Son of God, who has blessed us with His glory as He redeems us to be His children!

I know that Scripture says we should not be envious, but I admit that there are times I do feel a bit envious of Peter, James and John, especially as I read the events of our text. How blessed they were to be able to go with Jesus up that mountain that day. Imagine the wonder of something so fantastic, so unexpected, so indescribable as was that moment when Jesus *was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light*. The disciples had always known there was something special about Jesus. From His very first miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus showed that He was more than just another man. After that miracle John tells us: *“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”* (John 2:11, ESV) And when our text mentions that the events we remember today took place *after six days*, those six days refer to the days since Peter’s confident answer to Jesus’ question: *“But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (Matthew 16:15-16, ESV)

But as wonderful as all those other days may have been, that day on the mountain, standing there with Jesus, suddenly seeing that glory revealed, and then to see Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus—wow! That would have been a super Sunday. We know that it was something so marvellous that Peter didn't want to leave: ***“Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”*** Can we stay here, Jesus? This is just so wonderful! I don't want this glory to ever be hidden again!

What a wonderful day that must have been! What a 'super' day! But, as Jesus makes it clear to the disciples, they cannot stay on that mountaintop. Jesus did not come simply to awe the disciples with His glory, but to bring all who believe in Him to that glory. It was not just a coincidence that Jesus chose this time to reveal His glory in this way. When they left that glorious mountain, Jesus began His final journey to the cross. He knew that the coming days were going to be hard on his beloved disciples. Jesus wanted this super day to stay in their minds and hearts to give them the confidence to keep on believing, even when the horror of the cross kept them from seeing the glory of Christ. He wanted them to remember this glory after the Ascension, so that they would keep on proclaiming the Word of God, even when their preaching brought them persecution and hatred from men. He wanted them to proclaim the truth that John made known, that ***“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** (John 1:14, ESV) Knowing that glory—and the greater glory of the Risen Christ—they would have confidence to trust in Him, no matter what the world would bring. Yes, *that* would be a truly super Sunday!

Back in 2023, the real-life story of 4 best friends and New England Patriots fans inspired the movie, *80 for Brady*. Four older women take a life-changing trip to Super Bowl LI to see their hero, Tom Brady, play. The movie is filled with misadventures and wonderful circumstances that allow these seniors who had been bemoaning the mundane reality of their lives to witness an historic game and to meet their hero. Of course it is a movie, and it is much larger than life when compared to the actual story of the women who attended. But, at least in the movie, this was a life-changing event for these four 80-year old women.

The Transfiguration was a life-changing experience for Peter, James and John. Even though we were not eyewitnesses to the transfiguration, it is a life-changing experience for us. Through faith we have been given the wonderful privilege of seeing the Lord's glory revealed to us! The wonderful truth for us is that every Sunday here is Super Sunday. Here in this place, week after week, the glory of the Lord is revealed to sinners like you and me. Maybe we don't have the same image of glory that Peter, James and John saw on that mountain, but as Peter says in our Epistle lesson: ***“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,”*** (2 Peter 1:19, ESV) We see the glory of Christ shining through His Word. We come together in worship to hear again and again the wonders of God's love for us in His Son, who veils His glory for a time as He lives among us in perfect obedience to the will of His Father, and who shows His glory as He dies in our place on the cross, only to rise again in never-ending glory. We see the glory of Christ revealed in the promise of forgiveness spoken in His name. We see the glory of Christ when we come to the altar to partake of His true body and blood, given to us in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. We live in His glory as His baptized children, for we have died with Him so that we may also live with Him. By faith we share in that never-ending glory of Christ, even as we struggle through some of most inglorious moments of life.

And how we need to see that glory, especially in the midst of this troubled, evil and dark world. Flags around the country are flying at half-mast, to mourn and honour the victims of the horrible shooting in Tumbler Ridge, BC. People are trying to make sense of something that doesn't make sense. We see the hurt and grief in those families who lost children and loved ones. This is but a small taste of the darkness that is all around us. This is what sin brings to our world. It is what our sin brings to our lives. It seems we are fighting a losing battle. No matter how hard we try, we ***“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** (Romans 3:23, ESV) But here, losing isn't just a matter of going down in history as an 'also ran'. There are eternal consequences to our sinfulness. There is the terrible reality of hell and the eternal punishment we deserve.

My dear people, so loved by God, rejoice that on that mountain we see the glory that God has prepared for us in His Son. Jesus does leave that mountain and go to the cross for us. He does give His own life in our place. And then, on what truly is the most super Sunday, He rises from the dead, winning the victory over sin, death and hell for us. Christ appeared for us; He was transfigured for us, and most of all He died and rose again for us, that in Him we might have faith and hope. And that faith and hope give us reason to glory in the glorious Lord. What is it that St. Paul said? ***“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:56-57, ESV) Amen.