

The Transfiguration of our Lord
March 3, 2019

Text: Luke 9:28-36

Theme: "Sleepy?"

Are you sleepy? Probably not yet. You are just settling in. It is easier for that to happen if you are in a comfier seat, wrapped up, warm, but not hot, just right. Sleepy may come with stimulation that is not all that stimulating. Soon you are lulled into lala land, but surely that won't happen this morning. Your eyes will not grow heavy.

We know that feeling, heavy eyes. If it is happening while we are driving it's time to pull over or change drivers. Yes, we know those heavy eyes and nodding head. It could almost feel as though weights were pulling down on your eyelids. How heavy is that weight? Maybe we can think in terms of coins. There has been the practice of coins on eyelids, but it is associated with coins on the dead. Why would you do that? In paganism it could be to pay for passage into the afterlife, though a coin in the mouth may have been the trick for that. Was it to hold the eyelids closed? I don't know for sure. Maybe you do.

But think in terms of the weight of the coin. Is it a penny's weight, or a nickel, or a dime, or quarter, even-dollar weight you feel? The weights are (from US mint sight, 2.3g for a dime, 2.5g for a penny, 5g for a nickel, 5.7g for a quarter, 8.1g for dollar, and 11.3g for a half-dollar. Maybe sometimes it feels like the weight of a whole roll of coins.

Heavy eyes, so it was with Peter, James, and John. They were in a daze, even a stupor. They are heavy with sleep when a sight appears before them like they have never seen before. It was as though they were about to miss it. We too may be experiencing the heavy, loads that make it hard to see, or to affirm what God puts before us. In Christ there is a dazzling awakening.

Happy eyes, not heavy eyes is what we want. We don't like our faces all pulled down in sorrow. We want beaming. Happiness does show in the whole face, eyes included, not

just the mouth. Happy events and special people make that happen. Our eyes aren't closed on such occasions, no they are wide open. We could be aglow.

Happy eyes, good, eyes caught up in the pursuit of happy, maybe not. Reality may come up short of expectations. Pursuit of happy according to sinful desires diverts the eyes from the light of God's Word. Eyes in such a condition are being pulled closed to God's revelation, maybe loaded down with many coins.

Eyes could be heavy with sorrow. This happens with loss, be that loss of health, loss of friends, employment, or loss of loved ones. The dearer what is lost the heavier the eye. It could be a big loss—half dollar or ever dollar sized, or maybe it's the accumulation of the smaller—nickel and dimes, even pennies. Eyes can be heavy with disappointment and sorrow, hard to be opened to hope.

Today we see some heavy eyes on the mountain. These have been busy days for Peter, James, and John and the rest of the Twelve, maybe heady days. They had been sent out to cast out demons, cure disease, and proclaim the kingdom. They had done just that (Luke 9:1-6). They had journeyed to the other side of the lake with Jesus for some alone time, but not alone at all as a crowd followed and gathered. There Jesus would feed over five thousand people with just two fish and five loaves. Now that event may have been a little removed in time, but such a feat would have been physically taxing as they were the ones distributing the food and then gathering up the 12 baskets of leftovers.

There had been some heavy discussion as they journeyed to their present location. The question was asked by Jesus as to who the people were saying He was. They gave back the prevailing answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets of old risen from the dead. But Jesus wants their answer and Peter gives it, "The Christ of God." (9:18-20) Jesus then speaks hard words about the Son of Man suffering many things, being rejected by the leaders, killed, and rising again on the third day (v. 21, 22) Jesus goes on to

speak of denying self, taking up one's cross and following Him, about saving your life by losing it or losing your life by saving it (23-24).

We read of all these things in chapter 9 before we find ourselves up here on the mountain. It's only Peter, James, and John that Jesus takes up on the mountain. The others are left down below (as it turns out not to deal very well with an unclean spirit). These three are about to see Jesus as they have never seen Him before and are in danger of sleeping right through it. Their eyes were heavy. Had it been a long climb?

But eyes were not all that was heavy. There were heavy hearts, heavy heads (or hard heads). Theirs were heads heavy with ideas about the Christ that were different than what the One confessed to be the Christ was proclaiming. They did not want to hear of suffering and dying. It made for heavy thoughts as they thought about it. How could that ever be? What about the judgment on the enemies and glory for the followers, especially them? They hear these hard words from Jesus before they go up the mountain. They will hear more after they come down. Jesus would set His face to go to Jerusalem (9:51). What would happen there? They were to see more of Jesus' miracles and hear more of His words. Maybe as they considered Jesus' revelation of Himself and the reality of who they were, they had the same conviction as Peter, "depart from me for I am a sinful man." Were they heavy with sin?

What weighs on us, on our eyes or on our hearts? Is it disappointment? Maybe the world is not what we envision it should be. If our vision is directed by God's Word what we see is not what God would have. A world where darkness is sought as being the light is disappointing. Then we realize we are not what God would have us be. We remember we are being restored in God's image in Christ, but our reflection in the mirror of God's law shows us there is a lot of work to be done. We see our sin. Is it penny sized, quarter sized, half-dollar, a whole pile? The inclination is to point to the size of another's pile which only increases the height of ours.

Heavy eyes, and hearts, but then awakening, maybe it's by a shocking event. You are not feeling well, then tests and you know why and it's not good. Your spouse says she has had enough, no joy, no happiness, and she out of here. One near and dear to you says this faith business is no business of his. It won't pay the bills; it won't bring advancement, it will just cost you time and resources and maybe get you labeled as a fool. Such things do get our attention. If our eyes have been a bit dazed, now they are open, but what's the answer?

The heavy eyes of Peter, James, and John are opened to a glorious sight. Maybe Peter, James, and John can't believe their heavy eyes. There is Jesus, but He's different, a different you can't miss. He's just glowing, bright as lightning. But there's more. It's no longer the four of them, now it is the six of them. Here are Moses and Elijah also in glory speaking with Jesus. Maybe the three apostles rubbed their eyes, tried to knock the cobwebs out of their heads, and looked at one another in puzzlement. But there is still more. The two are talking with Jesus, talking about His upcoming departure. But the eye and ear opening events are not over. A cloud overshadows them and it's really scary for they know it is the presence of the Holy One. "This is my Son, My Chosen One, listen to Him." (vs 34, 35)

How do the awakened three initially respond? At first it is in a bit of a stupor. Words come through Peter's lip that have not much been filtered through his head. "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (v. 33) There is fear with the cloud as we saw. Then when it is all over is there some shock? "And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen." (v. 36) How would they process it all?

They come off the mountain with Jesus go to Jerusalem. There will be no stopping Him and they will follow. Were they always hopeful that maybe Jesus didn't have it quite right? Was He somehow mistaken about the suffering and death part? Instead of that

would they see fire reigned down on enemies, even call it down, and see glory for the faithful, the faithful like them?

To Jerusalem they will come and it will be a hopeful start. Their eyes will see the crowds and their ears will hear the cries. “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” (19:38) Wonderful words that even reflected the words of the angels at His birth, though the disciples may not of known it at the time, words not so unlike what Peter, James, and John had heard on the mountain.

It’s a hopeful start but it all takes a disastrous turn. The apostles who considered themselves heavy in importance would be heavy in sorry. Their hearts would be heavy at the words of Jesus saying He was going away for a little while. Judas would run out and they suspected it had something to do with coins, but it was not what they thought. They go from the Upper Room to the Garden. All 11 go but Peter, James, and John are closer (Matthew 26:27). Again the eyes of these three are heavy with sleep (Matthew 26:43). The hour is at hand, the one awaited since the fall into sin, and these three are about to sleep through it.

But they won’t. There is an awakening, a rude one as Judas comes leading those armed with clubs and swords. They will see the words of Jesus’ coming true, probably more horrific than they could have imagined. He will be tried, condemned, and led outside the city to be crucified between two criminals. He is mocked and ridiculed, belittled. He cries out. He breathes His last. His buried in a rich man’s tomb. Did that burial include coins on his eyes? There are sights that should not been seen and sounds that should not be heard, not for their Lord, not for the Christ! They would like to close their eyes and make it all go away, but they can’t.

They go. They hide in fear, but soon there will be another awakening, a wonderful one, one that is just too good to believe initially. On the third day, early, there is the report from women that the body is missing and angels have told them Jesus is risen. Two

disciple heavy with sorrow are on their way to Emmaus when they are overtaken by the risen Jesus, thought initially they don't know. Then they do and they rush back to the others to tell them and learn He has appeared to Simon and suddenly Jesus is there! He proclaims "peace," assures them He is no ghost but flesh and bones. He tells them it as all as written of Him and they are His witnesses.

Their eyes are opened and hearts are no longer heavy the One before them is the Son of God, truly the One to be listened to. It is God the Son who died on the cross, for them. He is the one risen and who will ascend to reign until the time of His return. They are awakened to the truth through the Spirit.

Here we are today convinced of the same truth through that same Spirit. We know that the full load of our sin whatever size or denomination has been carried by our Lord and we have His righteousness. All this is our through our trust in Him. The shroud of death is torn and we will have life with Him in glory forever even as we have life for now. It doesn't matter if we are up on the mountain of life or way down in the valley or more likely somewhere in between we are His.

We have been awoken from death to walk in this life as His servants. The light of the Gospel is the great Epiphany that it is God in the flesh who has come to save us so that we one day in the flesh, transformed flesh, and not only spirit be with Him in the new heavens and the new earth. There is relief for eyes heavy in sorrow and hearts heavy in sin. We have this awakening news to share. For Jesus' sake. Amen