

## **“Our Shining Hours”**

Date: March 3, 2019

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Mark 9:2-29; 1 Kings 19:3-15

Occasion: Transfiguration Sunday

Theme: Transfiguration; holy moments

Have you seen the movie *Rudy*? It's several decades old, but it's a heart-warming story about a young man name Rudy who had one dream – to play football for Notre Dame. But Rudy hardly qualified to play for the Irish. Not only was he quite small, his talent for football left a lot to be desired. Even though Rudy went to work in a steel mill like his father, he never lost sight of his dream.

Pursuing his vision, Rudy made contact with a priest at Notre Dame and expressed his burning desire. The best the priest could do for him was to get him enrolled in a smaller community college nearby. However, the priest did promise Rudy that if he made good grades there, he would see what could be done to get him enrolled at Notre Dame.

Time does not allow for the telling of the whole story, but those of you who saw the movie or read the book about Rudy's remarkable life will recall sinking with Rudy through his rejections, and soaring with him through each hard-earned victory.

Rudy's persistence did eventually pay off. He barely made the team because of his hard work and intense desire...but he made it. He even got to play in a game...once! It was the last game of the season in Rudy's senior year. As the clock ticked down, it seemed he wouldn't get to play.

Then some supporters in the stadium began chanting his name: Rudy! Rudy! Rudy! Of course all of the Irish fans joined in: Rudy! Rudy! Rudy! Finally the coach heard the chant and at last sent Rudy in to play.

Amazingly, he did quite well. They won the game and Rudy was the hero everyone talked about in the afterglow. Surely, many of those who witnessed the event never forgot it. They were present for Rudy's shining hour and no doubt they rejoiced with the smiling young man, as he walked with a glow everywhere he went.

Today we will think together about another shining hour, one that involved Christ and those who witnessed it – Peter, James and John. I refer, of course, to the Transfiguration of Christ on a mountain top.

We do not know the name of the mountain. We just know that when Jesus and three of his friends were gathered on that high place, he was transfigured before them. St. Mark tells us that “His garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller or cleaner could bleach them.” (9:3)

Furthermore, the apostles sensed the presence of two heroes of Old Testament times: Moses and Elijah. Moses, of course, was the one who took the commandments down off the mountain to his people. Elijah was a great and true prophet of God, a holy spokesperson who was supposed to reappear before the Messiah came to earth.

The whole experience was so unusual, so awesome and disarming to the friends of Jesus, they scarcely knew what to make of it or what to say. St. Mark writes: “And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is well we are here; let us make three booths or tabernacles, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say.’” (9:5)

You can imagine that the three friends were even more astounded when they heard a heavenly voice say, “This is my beloved son, listen to him.” The entire experience was a profound supernatural phenomenon that they could only witness and wonder about for the rest of their days.

No doubt it was the Transfiguration and the Resurrection that inspired

Peter to write these words:

“We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased,’ we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Actually, the Transfiguration was not only a shining hour for Jesus; it was a glorious time for his three friends as well. Given all that they had seen and heard and experienced, they knew that this was a special, unforgettable occurrence for them. In a way, it was their shining hour as well.

Now, I wonder, what does this say to all of us? Beyond a reminder of the uniqueness of our Savior Jesus Christ, does it not also serve to remind us of our own shining spiritual hours? What’s your shining hour?

For me, I think of a Lay Witness Mission that was held in my church when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and I gave my life to Christ. I think of powerful speakers I heard when I attended Young Life in high school. I think of my ordination as a pastor in the United Methodist Church. I think of my wedding day and the birth of our son and the adoption of our daughter.

I think of Koinonia and Kairos weekends I participated in. And I think of counseling sessions when I experienced an *aha* moment that led to a change in my life. These were spiritual high moments in my life, when I felt the nearness, the closeness, the power of the Holy Spirit in my life.

What might be *your* shining hour? I do not refer to the time or times when you were honored by others, but when you experienced a spiritual glow, an epiphany you can never forget?

Was it when you were confirmed? When you were lonely and suddenly felt the Comforter by your side? When a loved one was snatched from you and in your crushing grief, you were assured by an inner voice saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” How about when you had some failure and thought you were of little worth, but then realized that God counts you as very special? Can you remember one of your shining hours with God?

We spoke about Elijah a while ago. In 1 Kings 19 we read an amazing story about that prophet. Elijah’s life had been threatened by Queen Jezebel who worshiped Baal. Elijah had to flee for his life. He went into hiding, taking refuge in a cave. There he was told: “Go stand upon the mountain before the Lord.”

While he stood there, he witnessed a strong wind; he felt an earthquake; he was confronted by a mighty fire. Finally everything ceased. No wind; no earthquake; no fire; just silence, holy silence. At that point Elijah heard a still small voice.

It was the comforting voice of God and Elijah knew full well that he was not alone in his battle for righteousness, in his standing forth for God. It was a true shining hour for the prophet.

Again, what was your shining hour? Carefully consider when you have felt the touch of God, felt the Holy Presence of the loving God, felt assured that all things were going to work together for good because you love God. And more importantly, because God loves you.

And, if perhaps you’ve never had such a wonderful experience, allow yourself to be open to one. God wishes to communicate with His beloved. He never forsakes us. In fact, the basic truth of the Bible is that God seeks us, wants us and reaches out for us.

God says to each of us, just as God did to the people in the Garden of Eden, “Adam, where are you? Eve, where are you?” And God seeks us wherever we may be, even if we try to hide.

Oh, friends, whatever you do, don’t hide. Get out of the cave, like Elijah, and go to the mount. Like Jesus and his friends, go for the higher ground, be still and wait for the still small voice. Listen. In God’s good time, you will hear it. And you will be abundantly blessed. Amen.

This sermon borrows heavily from a sermon by the same title published by *Parish Publications*, Madison Heights, MI: February 9, 1997.