

Levenhagen λογοι

February 2021

Thoughts from Aaron *Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory*

"After six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves..." (Mark 9:2a). Six days after what? Jesus and His disciples had been in the area of Caesarea Philippi, in the far north of Israel. There Jesus asked them the most important question of their time together: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). Immediately, Peter speaks up, and for the first time one of the Twelve identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus goes on to teach His disciples the implications of Messiahship: suffering and death.

Six days later, they are ready for another lesson in His identity. The high mountain Mark describes is most likely Mt. Hermon, the highest peak inside modern Israel's borders, towering 9,230 feet above sea level. Jesus now leads Peter, James, and John on the grueling hike up the slope to the summit. While they were there, "His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.... And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son; listen to Him'" (Mark 9:2b-3, 7). Imagine the terror and exhilaration! And as quickly as the cloud appeared, just that quickly it disappeared.

Rev. Thomas Troeger vividly describes this moment in his hymn "Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory" (LSB 416):

*Swiftly pass the clouds of glory, heaven's voice, the dazzling light;
Moses and Elijah vanish; Christ alone commands the height!
Peter, James, and John fall silent, turning from the summit's rise,
Downward toward the shadowed valley Where their Lord has fixed His eyes.*

And as soon the walk down the mountain began, Jesus was again speaking to them of suffering. He takes their eyes off the mountaintop and puts them back on Him and what He was about to do for them...and for us. Oh, how we want to stay on the mountaintop with a cloud overshadowing all the troubles of our lives. But Jesus doesn't want our eyes on the mountaintop. He wants our eyes on Him.

*Lord, transfigure our perception with the purest light that shines,
And recast our life's intentions to the shape of Your designs,
Till we seek no other glory than what lies past Calvary's hill
And our living and our dying and our rising by Your will.*

We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure...the Word, 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 1:18-19, ESV)



Above: Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus, Concordia Seminary, looking west through the Main Quadrangle Archway

Prayer Requests

- For our landlord, Pam, whose husband passed away in January after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. And for opportunities to offer comfort and share the gospel.
- For Nathan, that he finds a new job that meets his interests and gives him the hours he needs.
- For Faith, as she continues in online school, that she will adjust to the new academic demands of middle school.
- For Dr. Thomas Egger as he deliberates the call to serve as Concordia Seminary's next president.

Classroom Corner

Academic & Field Work Update

As I write this, we're already a couple of weeks into the second semester and have returned to in-person instruction. Here's a quick update on my current coursework and field work.

The Pastor and the Church in Mission – this is a half-semester course taught by Dr. William Schumacher focusing on the dynamics of missional outreach, cross-cultural communication, and bringing the message of the gospel into different contexts.

Homiletics – here we learn the theology and practice of preaching. I'll be writing several sermons and will be receiving both instructor and peer feedback. A definite mix of anticipation and terror! For this course, I'm studying with Dr. Peter Nafzger.

Synoptic Gospels – this half-semester course introduces the first three Gospels. My section will be doing an in-depth exegetical study of the Gospel of Luke. I'm privileged to be taught by Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald.

Creeds and Confessions – this course is the second systematic course in the curriculum. We're studying the Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. I'm very excited to be studying with Dr. Robert Kolb, who is one of, if not THE foremost translator and scholar of the Lutheran Confessions.

Formation Group – once a week, I have the opportunity to meet with a small group of fellow first-year seminarians to not only learn about various topics in preparation for ministry but also to support and pray for each other. This group will stay together throughout my time at the seminary and is mentored by Dr. Dale Meyer.

Field Work – I continue to have the opportunity to lead liturgy and teach adult Bible classes. This semester I'm also giving the occasional children's sermon and helping with worship at a local senior center. I'll also be preaching my first homily during one of the midweek Lenten services next month.

LEFT: Nathan & Faith on Christmas; CENTER: Faith's Self-Baked Christmas Sweet Feast
RIGHT: Formation Mentor Dr. Meyer's Presidential Portrait Unveiling



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