

The 2019 Oscars were awarded one week ago, and whether or not you pay any attention to such things, you certainly are aware of what it means to walk the red carpet. It’s the glamorous means by which Hollywood stars enter the auditorium. Cable networks devote hours to red carpet coverage. Paparazzi and lucky fans strain to get as close as possible. It’s all about the grand entrance.

I bring this up because we have an incredible paradox in Jesus’ transfiguration. On the mountain, Jesus starts to shine with brilliant light; this looks like it’s going to be a supernatural grand entrance of some sort—especially when Moses and Elijah arrive! But then Jesus starts talking with them, and instead of talking about making a grand entrance, they talk about making a grand exit. They talk about Jesus’ departure. What was going on?

The author of this gospel, St. Luke, gives us a tantalizing bit of information. The word Luke uses for “departure” is literally the word "exodus." Two of the greatest heroes of the Old Testament have reappeared to talk with Jesus about his grand exit—his exodus—that he is about to undergo in Jerusalem. Who better to talk to Jesus about this than the man who led the original exodus?

Moses' exodus from Pharaoh and the slavery in Egypt is crucial for understanding the pattern of how God works his will in the world. God leads Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea to Mount Sinai and then beyond in a spectacular exodus from slavery to freedom. This exodus was not without great pain, but God was always faithful to His promises.

Elijah's exodus is a bit different. His exodus happened when he departed this world. Elijah made a grand exit before the eyes of his successor, Elisha. A fiery chariot swooped down from above, collected Elijah and launched him heavenward in a windstorm. Elijah also had experienced suffering and a famous dark night of the soul, but persevered through the power of God’s Word.

And now Elijah and Moses stand with Jesus and speak with Him knowing that His exodus will be the greatest of all. What Jesus is about to do will lead billions of people out of slavery. He will bring them through life-giving water into a time of wilderness wandering, during which He will speak God’s Words and miraculously feed them until they enter a greater land. See how that works? Jesus will deliver us from the slavery of sin by taking our place in death, and will launch us heavenward because He rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and is preparing a place for us in His Father's house. Just as Moses and Elijah experienced, Jesus’ exodus will be painful, and will, in fact, make Him feel utterly rejected by his Father—the highest cost He could possibly pay. But that’s what faithfulness does—it looks to the final goal and considers that the highest good, which in this case was our acceptance. He was willing to suffer rejection so that we could be accepted.

Transfiguration is about Jesus preparing to make a history-changing exodus; preparing to make a grand exit.

Are you prepared for your grand exit from this life? I'm not asking about funeral arrangements, I'm asking about soul arrangements. Sadly, many people have failed to be prepared for their grand exits. Sadly, because sin has ravaged bodies and souls, despair is the default of many as they stand at death's door. Regrets abound as thoughts of "Wish I would've..." "I suppose I should've..." and "I think I could've..." flood the brain. Worse yet is the conviction that comes with a lifetime of neglecting and disrespecting God.

But listen: you can be prepared for your grand exit from this world because Jesus' grand exit has forgiven you and paid for your entrance into heaven. Jesus became our substitute under God's Law. He lived the Law perfectly, and then offered His perfect achievement as a sacrifice on Calvary's cross. This is the currency with which He has paid for your sin. Your balance sheet reads zero. "Paid in Full." This is the announcement of new life. This is the invitation of the Holy Spirit: Humble yourself and let Jesus pay for you!

Some time ago, a pastor was asked to preach the message at a friend's wedding. Because the groom had been blessed with means, he paid for housing for the whole wedding party at a five star hotel. On the morning of the wedding, the pastor went downstairs to the restaurant to eat breakfast. Looking at the menu, he was somewhat perplexed-there were no prices accompanying the entrees. But he wasn't too concerned; he thought, "how expensive could scrambled eggs with salmon, bacon, coffee, orange juice, and toast be?" All too soon he found out. The waiter slipped him the bill and he almost choked. The total was about four times the price of what he normally paid for breakfast. To his embarrassment, he only had a \$20 bill on him and that wasn't going to touch the price. Beginning to sweat, he stared at the bill, not noticing the waiter approach until he cleared his throat. The waiter, looking embarrassed, gently removed the bill from his hand and said, "Excuse me Rev. Smith, but I was not supposed to give you this bill. Please forgive my foolishness. Your bill has already been paid, including the tip, as is everything you may want or need in this hotel."

Flooded with relief, the pastor replied, "Oh don't worry at all about me seeing the bill, but tell me, how do you know my name?"

The waiter winked and said, "It is our privilege and pleasure to know all of our guests' names."

Knowing that neither you nor I could afford the price of heaven's admission, Jesus paid the price in full with His own blood and death, and assures you that everything in heaven will be free. He knows your name and everything about you, and as a pledge of His love, He has placed His name upon you in Holy Baptism, and with that Name comes every amenity of His Kingdom.

People will always be concerned with first impressions and grand entrances. Jesus had something else in mind. Transfiguration tells us He was more concerned with a grand exit; His exodus. And since that's true, you have a land of promise waiting for you.