

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” And it was. **“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”** It was all good in the Garden of Eden.

They say an evil thing is a good thing gone bad. When Adam and Eve took of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they crossed a line. To disobey God is to say: I don’t need you. The exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

Imagine paradise, but in the rearview mirror, an angel blocking it with a flaming sword. There is no good without God; Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. The best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die.

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. There must have been tears of pain and sorrow as Adam and Eve were kicked out. Outside of the Garden, each step moved closer to death, yet God had an exodus planned for that.

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” **“Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.”**

What a wild ride it was for Moses and the Israelites: slavery by the Egyptians, ten plagues, plundering the Egyptians, crossing the Red Sea miraculously, and forty years in the wilderness! This whole event was called the Exodus, in fact, the second book of the Bible is called the Exodus or the road out. The exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

Mount Sinai where the law was given, Mount Nebo where Moses saw the future country for his people. All these mountaintop experiences, but it still wasn’t good enough. Of the generation that left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb would enter the Holy Land. The rest died, even Moses because the best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die.

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. Yes, Moses was great, but he wouldn’t finish the job. Joshua would arise and take the next generation through the Jordan River to the Promised Land on the other side.

“‘Twas good Lord, to be *there*.” That’s what Elijah said thinking back. It was great when Elijah called fire down from heaven and defeated the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. With one prayer, Elijah defeated the prayers of 850 false prophets. Who would have bet on those odds?

But on a second mountain, Mount Horeb, Elijah wasn’t so confident anymore. When word came that Elijah defeated those false teachers, Queen Jezebel made Elijah flee for his life. The exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

On Mount Horeb, the Lord came to Elijah in the still small voice, reminding him there was a faithful remnant, one who had not kissed the enemy. I wish I could tell you that the faithfulness of prophets like Elijah won the day, but the nation of Israel—the one that the likes of Moses and Joshua fought to establish—that nation went the way of Queen Jezebel: evil, idolatry, and sin. The best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die.

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. **“By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.”** Over two hundred years after Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, maybe the people of Judah remembered their father and mother, Adam and Eve, as the Babylonians dragged them out of Jerusalem. Even then, the God had an exodus planned for that.

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” Peter wanted to take the moment and bottle it up. Let’s build some tents and bask in the glory of Jesus transfigured. Wouldn’t you want that?

But instead, Jesus had work to do. He was having a conference with Moses and Elijah, stars from earlier in our story. Moses and Elijah were talking about Jesus’ departure—His Exodus—that He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. The exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

The Bible never tells us where this Mount of Transfiguration was. Maybe it’s because the Holy Spirit knew that if He told us, we too wouldn’t want to leave. We’d all move to Jerusalem, and we’d camp around the mountain, waiting for a glorious moment of our own. Yet Jesus, Peter, James, and John couldn’t stay. There was work to do. Jesus was not okay with the statement: “The best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die.”

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. This exodus that Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem had its challenges. We as the Church are about to enter the season of Lent. In this season we join Jesus as He makes that journey to Jerusalem. **“When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”**

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” Yet we still kind of puzzle over the name “Good Friday.” It might have been nicer to stay back at the Transfiguration mount. Two criminals dying alongside you on Mount Calvary are hardly a match for Moses and Elijah!

They say an evil thing is a good thing gone bad. Who is going to make those bad things good again? The sins of the whole world: Adam and Eve, Moses and the Israelites, all the worshippers of false Gods, and even your sin and mine. Somebody had to do something with all these sins. As Jesus departed this life, the exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

On the cross, on Good Friday, that shining star of perfection was made into a black hole of filth. The one perfect man took on the sins of the whole world. The best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die, so die Jesus did. For you.

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. **“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”** God sunk our sins to the bottom of the sea by His Son accomplishing this Exodus, and so our sins set their feet out the door, never to return.

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” And so we can say that fully and heartily on this Transfiguration Sunday as we are gathered as God’s people. We are the Israelites walking into the Promised Land. We are the first disciples who are overcome with joy at the resurrection of our Savior.

Christ’s Church is a plot of paradise in a wasteland. Stop looking at maps of the Middle East, the Church is God’s Israel. Christ’s gathered guests around the sacred meal of His body and blood at the Lord’s Supper is more glorious than the Transfiguration Mount, more victorious than Elijah defeating the prophets of Baal. The Church is a way out of the insanity in the world around us. The exodus reminds us there’s a reason to leave.

And Christ calls us to an exodus of our own. A daily exodus to sin. We confessed our sins at the beginning of this service, and to live as a baptized child of God is daily to ask for forgiveness and drown out the old Adam—and Eve—in us because the best thing you can do with the sinful is let them die.

The exodus hurts, yet the first foot forward is out the door. It’s not always easy to gather with other Christians. It doesn’t always feel good to be here. This exodus from the ways of the world can have it’s painful moments, but in the difficult times, look to Christ, that shining star on the Transfiguration Mount, and look ahead to what awaits.

“‘Tis good Lord, to be here.” **“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”**

Beyond the Garden of Eden, beyond Mount Sinai, Nebo, Carmel, Horeb, the Transfiguration Mount, or even Mount Calvary, beyond all of these awaits Mount Zion, which is the Bible’s term for eternal life in Heaven. Christ accomplished this Exodus ultimately for that. That He may gather with His people—the spirits of the righteous made perfect—in a feast that never ends. Amen!