

SESSION 6

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GALILEAN: PETER'S RISING LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

In the sixth session of our study of St. Peter, we journey with Peter from Galilee to Jerusalem. The last session covered Peter receiving the keys of the kingdom; this session continues to explore the inseparable relationship between the King and the kingdom and how Peter acts as a bridge between the two.

Today's session discusses the Transfiguration. Peter, along with John and James, goes with Jesus up a mountain to pray and receive a special revelation of Jesus' glory. Peter hears the voice of the Father speaking out of the cloud: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Luke 9:35). This experience prepares the Apostles for the sufferings awaiting Jesus in Jerusalem—and the challenges and sufferings they will experience as a result of following him.

When Peter arrives at Jerusalem with Jesus and the other disciples, he will have a special role to play in proclaiming the arrival of Jesus as King. But this King has come to conquer something other than a Roman oppressor, and Peter will learn what it means to truly serve in this new kingdom.



CONNECT

First review the last session with your group. Can anyone recite the Memory Verse without assistance? Otherwise, look it up (Matthew 16:19) from last week (page 89) and recite it as a group. Then bring up any highlights the group may have regarding the COMMIT section from last session.

1. Share an example of a king or kingdom, either from history or from a story or movie, that has made a strong impression on you. What struck you most about this king and his kingdom? How do earthly kingdoms inform your perceptions of the Kingdom of God?
Some examples may be Aragorn and the kingdom of Gondor from Lord of the Rings, a kingdom from a fairy tale, King Arthur, etc. We know that kings and kingdoms go together in stories; today's session makes clear how the two are inseparable in the Church as well.
2. Think of an experience or a period in your life that you didn't want to end. How did you try to prolong it? How did you feel when it eventually ended? How did its memory affect you afterward?
On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter offers to build three booths. We get the sense that Peter wants to stay, to remain in that "mountaintop experience" rather than returning to the mundane. We know that this experience sticks with Peter as he reflects on it near the end of his life in 2 Peter 1:16-19.

3. Have you ever spoken or acted impulsively? If so, in what circumstances did it serve a good purpose? In what circumstances did it lead to regret? In either case, would prayer have helped you? What did you learn from those experiences?

In the gospels, Peter is often impetuous. In the encounter with the collectors of the half-shekel tax for the Temple, he answers a question on behalf of Christ without first consulting Jesus. Even though Peter seems to have answered incorrectly, Jesus uses the opportunity to teach Peter a truth about the kingdom. Even when we act rashly and end up making the wrong decision, God directs us with his correction.



Play the video segment, which will last for approximately 45 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.



DISCUSS

Following are suggested answers to the DISCUSS questions.

1. What answer is usually given to the question, "Why did Jesus die?" What answer does Dr. Gray give to the question, "Why did Jesus live?" According to Dr. Gray, why is this second question as important as the first?

Jesus died to save us "from" our sins. Jesus lived to save us "for" the kingdom. It's unwise to reduce Jesus' whole mission to his death alone, because he clearly came for more than that—to build something new. Numerous times Jesus avoids death: Mary and Joseph flee Bethlehem with the infant Jesus and escape Herod's killing of the innocents (Matthew 2); Jesus passes through the midst of the crowd in Nazareth when they tried to throw Jesus off the cliff (Luke 4:29-30); Jesus escapes the Pharisees' attempt to stone him (John 8:59); and he escapes an attempt to arrest him (John 10:39). The timing of Jesus' death corresponds to the establishment of the kingdom. Once he has established the foundation on which he will build his kingdom, then he is ready to die and "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

2. During the Transfiguration the Father says, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him." What is the Old Testament background for the titles of "my Son" and "my Chosen," as well as the command to "listen to him"? "My Son" alludes to Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Just as Abraham, a loving father, is willing to offer his only son as a sacrifice, so too will God the Father offer his only beloved Son as a sacrifice for our sins. "My Chosen" is a phrase used in Isaiah 42:1 to describe the Suffering Servant. "Listen to him" indicates that Jesus is the new Moses, as promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18.

3. On the mountaintop Peter responds to the vision of Jesus' glory by offering to build three booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Have you ever seen or felt the glory of God? If so, describe your experience. Have you ever had such a profound spiritual experience that you wanted to mark or commemorate it in some way, as Peter wished to do with the three booths? If so, what did you use?

Answers will vary.

4. Second Peter 1:19 calls the Transfiguration a "lamp shining in a dark place." Share an experience that encourages you in difficult times.

Answers will vary.

5. Dr. Gray calls Peter the bridge between the King and his kingdom. How do the actions and words of Peter help you recognize Christ as King?

Some possible examples: The example of Peter's faith and loyalty strengthen my resolve to remain faithful; Peter's preaching in his two epistles teach and encourage me; the example or teaching of the successor of Peter, following in Peter's footsteps, helps me be more faithful; etc.

6. Dr. Gray says that loyalty to the King necessitates loyalty to his kingdom. How do you live as a loyal citizen of the kingdom?

Some examples: faithful to the Magisterium of the Church; active in my parish; teaching Religious Education; being a sponsor for RCIA; etc.



COMMIT

Following are suggested answers to questions in the daily COMMIT reflections.

COMMIT DAY 1 – THE TRANSFIGURATION

Participants will learn about Mount Tabor and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Mount Tabor is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. Look up the following verses and note what is said about Mount Tabor.

Joshua 19:22—*identifies Tabor as the boundary between the lands allocated to the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun*

Judges 4:4-7—*Deborah instructed Barak to assemble his forces on Mount Tabor before defeating Sisera and his army*

Psalms 89:12—*uses Mount Tabor symbolically for all of the northern part of Israel*

Jeremiah 46:18—*Mount Tabor is a symbol of the power and majesty of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon*

Hosea 5:1—*the prophet references the practice of idolatry on Mount Tabor in his warning to the leaders of the Northern Kingdom*

Look up Leviticus 23:39-43. What are some of the defining characteristics of the celebration of this feast?

Answers may include: harvest, solemn rest, eight days, fruit, palm branches, rejoicing, dwelling in booths, commemorating the Exodus

Look up Numbers 9:15-17. What do the lamps commemorate?

These lamps and their brilliant light reminded Israel of the pillar of cloud and fire that rested over the Tabernacle (also called the Tent of Meeting) and by which God led the Israelites through the desert wilderness.

The Feast of Tabernacles also becomes associated with the Temple because Solomon dedicates the Temple on the Feast of Tabernacles. Look up the following passages. What happens during the dedication of the Temple?

1 Kings 8:10-11 – “And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.”

2 Chronicles 7:1 – “When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”

During the dedication of the Temple, fire comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifices offered at the dedication, and the cloud of God's glory fills the Temple.

The psalmist often sings of the protection and watchful care that God gives his people. How does he express God's care in the following verses?

Psalm 27:5 – “For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high upon a rock.”

Psalm 61:4 – “Let me dwell in thy tent for ever! Oh to be safe under the shelter of thy wings!”

Psalm 91:1 – “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,”

Psalm 121:5 – “The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.”

How does the context of the Feast of Tabernacles shape Peter's experience of the Transfiguration and his inquiry about building booths on the mountain?

Peter offers to build three booths. If the Transfiguration occurs during the Feast of Tabernacles, then Peter is a faithful Jew who wants to celebrate the feast as Moses (who is present) described it in Leviticus: by dwelling in booths.

How might the Father's words, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” express the Father's watchful care both for Jesus and for the disciples?

The words “my Son, my Chosen” express the Father's love of his beloved Son. The words “listen to him” express his love of the disciples because listening and following Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), will lead to the disciples' eternal happiness.



COMMIT DAY 2 – PETER'S WORDS: BEFORE AND AFTER

Participants will compare Peter's conversations with Jesus between the events of the Transfiguration and the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, and passages from 1 and 2 Peter.

Peter, who with the other Apostles was afraid to even leave the upper room after Jesus' crucifixion, does what after Pentecost in Acts 2:14? (And note how big the crowd is in Acts 2:41.)

Acts 2:14 – “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.’” (Acts 2:41 tells us that 3,000 were baptized that day after Peter's preaching, so the crowd would have been even greater in number.)

What happens at Peter's words in Acts 3:6-8?

Acts 3:6 – "But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'"

With these words, the lame man leaps and walks.

How do the Jewish leaders respond to Peter in Acts 4:13?

Acts 4:13 – "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

What do people expect to happen when Peter walks by in Acts 5:15?

Acts 5:15 – "[S]o that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them."

Look up these verses and then fill in the following chart with some observations about the conversations between Peter and Jesus compared with Peter's later preaching.

Peter's conversation with Jesus	Peter's preaching
Luke 12:35-48 <i>1st parable: faithful servants waiting for master to return—the master will serve them</i> <i>Peter asks if this is for everyone or just for Apostles</i> <i>2nd parable: Wise and faithful steward (Peter) taking care of household (everyone) while master is gone; an unfaithful steward will be punished</i> <i>1st parable for everyone, 2nd parable for Peter specifically</i>	1 Peter 4:7-11, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Peter 3:14 <i>Keep sane and sober, pray, love one another, be good stewards of what God has given you.</i> <i>Be sober and watchful.</i> <i>Be zealous as you wait for God so you can be found perfect by him; be at peace while you wait.</i> <i>Peter passes on the first parable to his audience in his letters.</i>
Matthew 18:21-22 <i>Peter: How many times do I have to forgive my brother?</i> <i>Jesus: There should be not limit to your forgiveness.</i>	1 Peter 3:9 <i>Return evil and reviling with blessing—forgive instead of taking revenge.</i>
Matthew 19:27-30 <i>Peter: We have left everything to follow you—what will we get in return?</i> <i>Jesus: You will reign with me in heaven.</i> <i>Everyone who gives up something will receive much, much more.</i>	1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 Peter 5:1, 10; 2 Peter 1:3-4, 11 <i>We who are faithful receive:</i> <i>Hope</i> <i>Imperishable inheritance</i> <i>A share in glory</i> <i>Restoration and strength</i>



All things pertaining to life and godliness

A share in the divine nature

An entrance into the eternal kingdom

COMMIT DAY 3 – GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S

Participants will take a closer look at Jesus' response to questions about paying the Temple tax.

What tax were the tax collectors referring to? Look up the following passage. Who pays the tax and what is the money to be used for?

Exodus 30:13 – *"Each who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD."*

Every male, 20 years and older, was to pay the tax. (Only men were required to pay the tax, as is indicated by the masculine pronoun "himself" in Exodus 30:12 and by the record of the actual taking of a census in Numbers 1.) The tax was used for the "service of the tent of meeting," which was the traveling tabernacle before the Temple was built. Once Solomon builds the Temple, the tax is taken to provide for the service of the Temple, thus the name "Temple tax." In the time of Herod, the frequency of the tax was increased to fund Herod's rebuilding of the Temple.

Sts. Peter and Paul often refer to Christians as servants of God. See the following passages:

Romans 1:1 – *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ..."*

1 Corinthians 7:22 – *"...he who was free when called is a slave of Christ."*

Philippians 1:1 – *"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus..."*

Colossians 3:24 – *"...you are serving the Lord Christ."*

1 Peter 2:16 – *"...live as servants of God."*

Peter and Paul equate following Jesus with being slaves who serve, not against our will, but as men and women freed from the bondage of sin who now serve our Master out of gratitude (see Romans 6:17-18).

What things possess God's image?

Genesis 1:27 – *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*

Man and woman are created in God's image; the human person. "I" am created in God's image.

What does St. Paul say we are to present to God?

Romans 12:1 – *"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."*



COMMIT DAY 4 – AMBASSADOR FOR THE KINGDOM

Participants will reflect on the relationship between king and kingdom, and how Peter is a bridge between the two.

Look up the following passages. Who is being made king and what events mark the kingship?
Solomon is being anointed king and he rides on King David's donkey to the ceremony.

1 Kings 1:33-34 – *“And the king said to them, ‘Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’”*

Jehu is being anointed king, and in recognition of his kingship the people lay their garments on the ground in front of him.

2 Kings 9:12-13 – *“And they said, ‘That is not true; tell us now.’ And he said, ‘Thus and so he spoke to me, saying, “Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel.” Then in haste every man of them took his garment, and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, “Jehu is king.””*

Who in your life helps bring you closer to the King and his kingdom, as Peter does?

Answers will vary.

Read St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:20. How are you an ambassador for the kingdom? How do you help others draw closer to the King?

2 Corinthians 5:20 – *“So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

Answers will vary. Some examples are religious instruction, apologetics, inviting others to Mass, ministering to the homebound, volunteering for your parish, etc.

What is one concrete thing you can do this week to express the reality that you are a loyal subject of the King and his kingdom?

Answers will vary; some examples include invite someone to Mass; volunteer for something at your parish; offer to bring your priest(s) a meal; make a holy hour; etc.



COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Participants will reflect on the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration from the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in the Holy Land.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each describe the Transfiguration in their gospels. How do they describe Jesus, both his face and his dress, as he is transfigured?

Matthew 17:2 – *“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.”*

Mark 9:3 – *“[A]nd his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them.”*

Luke 9:29 – *“[T]he appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white.”*

How does the mosaic display Jesus' appearance?

Jesus' clothes are pure white in color, and his face is surrounded by a white iridescent halo. Additionally, the gold background helps to communicate the glory in which the epiphany appears to the Apostles.

The gospel writers tell us that Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus. The mosaic does not name these two figures. What symbols or objects are used to identify each man?

Moses is on the left, holding the tablets of the Old Covenant Law, which he received from God on top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 31:18 and 34:1). Elijah holds an open scroll. Such scrolls are often put in the hands of prophets representing the words of the prophets that predict the coming of Christ.

All three gospels tell us that Jesus took Peter, John, and James up a mountain. What reason does the Gospel of Luke give for the journey?

Luke 9:28 – “[H]e took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to **pray**.”
(emphasis added to answer question.)

According to Luke, what is Jesus doing when he is transfigured?

Luke 9:29 – “And **as he was praying**, the appearance of his countenance was altered.”
(emphasis added to answer question.)

In the Transfiguration apse mosaic, what is pictured at the top center? What does it represent?

The top center of the mosaic shows a blue sky filled with clouds and golden stars, representing the heavenly dwelling place of God.

In the Transfiguration mosaic, where is Jesus looking?

Jesus is looking up to the heavens. Since Luke tells us that Jesus was praying, we can imagine that he is looking at the Father.

The gospel writers often record Jesus going off alone to pray, sometimes to a mountain. Look up some examples in the following verses:

Matthew 14:23 – “And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.”

Mark 1:35 – “And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.”

Luke 5:16 – “But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.”

Luke is the only gospel writer to tell us the topic of conversation into which Moses and Elijah join.

What does Luke say?

Luke 9:31 – They “spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

NOTES
