

Mark 9:2-9

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⁵Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Imagine for a moment that you are one of Jesus' disciples. You saw him with a single word calm the raging waves of the sea. You saw him feed over 5000 people with an impossible couple of loaves of bread and some fish. He spoke with eloquent authority about God and life. He opened your eyes about true love and service. You saw him heal people from the most terrible diseases and even raise them from death itself. From the day you met him the main question on your mind has been "Who is this man?" Then, one day he asks you, "What about you? Who do you say I am?" And Peter says for all, "You are the Christ!" Indeed, you know he is the Messiah, the anointed one, the long-promised Savior! The King of Israel. But then he begins to teach you what he has come on earth to do and it doesn't make sense. He talks about his own suffering and shame, about his own rejection and death and resurrection. But this can't be right! That's not what Messiah is supposed to do, is it? Messiah is supposed to rule over Israel. He will throw out the hated Roman government and bring about a restoration of Israel's fortunes in the world. He's not supposed to die! Peter rebukes Jesus for saying these things and Jesus rebukes Peter. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" And he teaches his followers about their own suffering, following him is going to be no easy thing.

Now it's a week later after that conversation. And we come to this story. Jesus picks 3 disciples, Peter, James and John and goes up on a high mountain. This morning we go up the mountain with the disciples and see Jesus as he is. For on that mountain **God Gives a Glimpse of Jesus' Glory**. Why? 1) To powerfully demonstrate: Jesus is God. And...2) To prepare people for Jesus' cross.

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus (v2-4). Jesus is transfigured...changed. Not just his outward appearance is different. This isn't just some outward angelic glow...but his actual God-ness shines through. What Glory! Even his clothes...become so white that no man could make them that white. What is the most spectacular thing you've seen? A dazzling sunrise rising over the mountain peaks? A fireworks display that lights up the night sky? A breath-taking vista of stars? It all pales completely compared to seeing the wondrous glory of God himself shining through in the face of Jesus Christ. God throws back the veil and for a brief moment the disciples gaze on Jesus in his divine glory. What a sight.

And then more amazement: Moses and Elijah appear and they are talking with Jesus. Moses, that great, mighty leader of God's people who led them out of Egypt long ago. Moses, the one who went up a different mountain that thundered and smoked with God's presence and who came down with the Law directly from God. Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, the bringer of the Law....speaks to Jesus Christ...the perfect fulfillment of the Law And Elijah...the powerful prophet of old who zealously defended God's law and pointed people back to their God. The same Elijah we heard about in our Old Testament lesson this morning, who was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah, one of the chief prophets...speaks to Jesus Christ...the fulfillment of all the prophets and the one to whom they were pointing. And these disciples get to see it.

The disciples needed to see all of this. Jesus had recently been instructing them, teaching them about what his purpose was on earth...to suffer and die for sin. What a beautiful object lesson this is to reinforce what he's been teaching them!

The disciples needed this. They needed to see Jesus' glory. They so often thought in earthly terms. They expected Jesus to rule on earth, to set Israel up as the chief nation of the world. But instead he had much bigger things to do. Peter is still thinking in earthly terms in v5-6, **Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)** He's so awestruck he starts speaking without thinking. He wants this moment to go on forever. He's getting a foretaste of what heaven is going to be like. He's never seen anything so wonderful as this...he wants it to last! Set up shelters! Perhaps he thinks Jesus will now set up his reign on earth. Peter wants to have heaven on earth...But then another glorious thing happens.

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (v7) Then wonder on top of wonder a bright cloud comes. They hear the very voice of God the Father: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" This is my Son...the same words as at Jesus' Baptism...when Jesus began his earthly ministry. "Whom I love." The one perfect man who never sinned, the Father hates sin and sinner, but Jesus is one who never sinned, he had God's love. And the Father says "Listen to him!" Indeed the disciple needed to listen to him...Jesus has the words of everlasting life. He is the very Son of God.

We, disciples of Jesus in this age, need to know this too. It is good for us to come up this mountain with the disciples and in this story see the glimpse of Jesus' Glory. He certainly is true God. All too often we, like the disciples, can think only in earthly terms. We can so easily think of Jesus and Christianity as primarily a "solve" for our earthly problems. For example...think of our prayers...all too often we find ourselves praying for all the things we think we need—a better situation here on earth, or our problems to be solved, or our life to be easier. There isn't anything wrong with praying those kind of prayers...but if those dominate our prayer life...we might be thinking of Jesus in earthly terms, like the disciples. We often crave a heaven on earth and try to create it. We can easily make Jesus smaller than he is. Either by looking at our problems as bigger than what he can solve...and we doubt and despair in our own doings or by thinking that Jesus came primarily to make our life easy on earth, He didn't. Jesus, John chapter 16 said, "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world." We need to know that Jesus is God himself. We can bring to him the biggest problems in our life, the sins that lie on our hearts and consciences the deep fears that haunt us. He is our God who came and saved us.

We too need to hear the words from God "This is my Son, Listen to him!" Who do we listen to? There are many lies of the world, of Satan and our sinful nature: Lies like: "Money will make life easier." "Take a shortcut...no one will know." "You can determine your own standards of right and wrong." Do we listen? Do we fall into these thoughts? All too often we listen to lies instead of the Lord. Listen to him! We learn who we are from him—sinners, saved by him. He is the way the truth the life. He is the one who gives us the gospel...himself...his life and death for ours. This is his message. Listen to that. It is the truth in a world full of lies. Listen to him he's true God...God in all his glory.

God gives a glimpse of Jesus' Glory not only to show that he is true God...but also, to prepare people for Jesus' cross. **Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead** (v 8-9). Now they come down the mountain. The glory is gone. Everything is as it was before. Jesus' full glory again hidden from their eyes behind the scenes.

The disciples needed this "foretaste of heaven" to prepare for what was to come. So soon will come Jesus' severe humiliation and suffering and death. Their Messiah will be mocked and jeered. His face spit on, his back beaten, a crown of thorns pressed down on his brow, he will be nailed to an instrument of torture and executed. The disciples will be shocked, and scared and lost. All their hopes of an earthly Messiah will be terribly shattered. Their faith is going to undergo a difficult and frightening test...tested to the limits. What a blessing that they had the transfiguration. They have this memory to hold on to of Jesus in his glory. They have Jesus' words to hold on to. They need not doubt...though everything is falling apart before their eyes...still their Jesus is their God doing this for them.

We need this too. We need to come down the mountain with the disciples. We enter soon the season of lent...we too will see Jesus brought low. He won't look like God...he'll look like a weak man on a cross. As we consider all his suffering we need to remember that he's God, doing this to save us!

We need to remember Jesus' transfiguration for our own crosses in life. Earthly life is up and down...one moment a smile, the next a frown. It is never perfect, always struggling against sin and so often losing the struggle. Problems and sufferings come and go and come and linger. Pain seizes us. Relationships falter and fail us. Dear Christians, even through the tears of this earthly life...remember this story, remember the glimpse of Jesus' glory. He is your God. He lived and died for you and he is the one who promises that "all things work out for the good of those who love him." All the bad things that happen in our life...happen for his glory and for our good. We need to remember that Jesus is God is behind the scenes in our life working through all things for our benefit.

Now, through this difficult maze of earthly life... now, whatever your problems...whatever your sins...you know them better than I. No matter what...Remember the reality behind the scenes...heaven is already yours because of Jesus life and sacrifice and today you are one day closer to it. Then, in heaven there will be no pain, no sin, no struggle. There we will not just see a glimpse of Jesus' glory. We will see him in all his glory, forever. Amen

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