

Glory Is Coming!

Mark 9:2-13

The more clearly you see who Jesus is, the better you will know how to live in this world.

This basic message functions at the heart of the part of the Gospel of Mark that we are learning from this Lent Season, i.e., Mk 8:22-10:52. And, if today, like the early disciples, you're not seeing Jesus very clearly, then you may need to listen carefully to this message – because, in our text today, God's Word seeks to open your eyes to see Jesus.

In the story of Jesus up to now...

After 8 chapters telling us about Jesus doing miracles and exorcisms, forgiving sins and teaching as no one has ever taught, and engaging in incredible acts of love, the disciples still cannot see who he is. So, we began our Lenten series with the account in 8:22-26 of Jesus healing a blind man by spitting in his eyes. At first, the man saw only partially so that people looked like trees walking around – and, then later, Jesus enabled the man to see better. That led to last week's message from Mk 8:27 – 9:1 in which Jesus asked the disciples, "*Who do you think I am?*" Peter seemed to have discerned a little bit of who Jesus was, i.e., Peter thought he was the promised Messiah. But, Peter did not see that Jesus was also the one who had to suffer and die if anybody would ever have hope of forgiveness and eternal life. So, at best, Peter and the disciples were seeing Jesus only partially. For them, it was as if Jesus was a tree walking around.

So, what did Jesus do about their spiritual blindness? Did he have to spit again and again in their eyes so that they would see him better? Well, what he did was take three of them up a mountain. These three Jewish disciples would surely have known well that it was on a mountain that some of the great people of their past had met God – people like Moses and Elijah. What happened to them that day on that mountain is what I want us to think about today. We're going to do what my son Brandon called us to do in his message two weeks ago, i.e., experience Jesus calling all his followers to 1) see, 2) understand, and then 3) respond.

1. See -- *Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them (9:2-3).*

This episode begins with what might seem to be an unimportant detail, i.e., "*after 6 days*" (9:2a). But, it's not unimportant. That detail is striking because, up to now, Mark has not given us any time designations at all in his gospel. Instead, for 8 full chapters, all the action has been rapid fire. Mark describes each episode of Jesus's life by saying, "*this happened and then immediately that happened...*". But, in 9:2, Jesus slowed down.

"*After 6 days...*" Does that remind you of anything? Isn't it like God's creation of the world described in Genesis 1. God created rapidly and then stopped "*after six days.*" God slowed down his miraculous creating to see what he had made. With that in mind, it's evident that Jesus recognized that these disciples were still not seeing what they needed to see. But, he loved them and wanted them to see better. What Jesus wanted them to see is essential if they would ever grasp 1) who he is and 2) how we are to live after we become Christians.

So, Jesus slowed down. And, just like Jesus did with them, I'm going to slow down right now with you.

Let's think about what we're seeing in this text: These men had "*seen*" Jesus for 3 years – but the Bible tells us that they never really seen him. Now, in Jesus's last journey toward Jerusalem and his death, he facilitated an experience that, though they didn't grasp much of its meaning when it happened, they would remember it and cherish it after he was gone. One of them, John, would later write, "*We saw him. We saw the glory of the one and only Son of God (Jn 14:6).*" But, when they first saw that glory, they still didn't see it – not fully.

The word that describes what they saw is translated "transfigured" in v. 2. That was a word for something real that is inside but grows or morphs to be seen on the outside. In other words, that person or being that is "transfigured" is changed in a way consistent with what he was before but, after the transfiguration, can be seen visibly. You see, this transfigured Jesus is still the Jesus they knew before -- but there is something more about him than they had previously seen – and that "something more" is "deity".

Let me read **vv. 2-3** again: "*Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*" This is like what happened to Moses when he had met God on the mountaintop in Exo 34. But, with Moses, only his face was radiant after meeting with God. But, Jesus in this case is the radiant one. This radiance is what God's people have called "shekinah glory", the glory of God.

Later, in the NT, the writer of Hebrews said that Jesus himself is "*the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his nature* (**Heb 1:3**)." All this is to say that, to see Jesus, this one born in a lowly manger, was, at the same, to see God. (See **Jn 14:9**.) Jesus is the Shekinah presence of God.

So, in last week's message, we heard Jesus ask, "*Who do people say I am* (**8:27**)?" All the answers of the people at large were wrong: They were saying, "John the Baptist reincarnate", "Elijah returned", "another great prophet..." Even Peter's answer, i.e., "you are the Messiah" was only part of the answer. Today in our passage, we hear *God the Father* speak from out of a cloud saying, "*This is my beloved Son* (**9:7**)!"

So, now, you have heard this report from Mark 9:2-3. When you look at Jesus, who do you say he is? Whom are you seeing when you see Jesus? Does he seem a bit confusing and vague – like a tree walking around? Do you need him to come and spit in your eyes? That's my first word: See.

2. Understand – Peter said, "*Rabbi, let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.*" (He did not know what to say. He was so frightened) (**9:5-6**).

Shockingly, Elijah and Moses show up. Why Elijah and Moses? Maybe because both had conversed with God on mountaintops. Maybe because both of them had also experienced something of God's glory. **I think the main point of the story is that Moses was the great lawgiver who had establishing Israel as a people. And Elijah was the great prophet calling people back to God. They were the ones people looked to as the great figures of the past.** Moses had rescued people from slavery and had defeated the great Pharaoh. Elijah had defeated all the prophets of Baal. You see, those were the good old days. Those were the times of victory. Now, Israel was under the oppression of a pagan government. These men wanted it to be the way it used to be.

So, for the three disciples, it's clear that, without taking time to understand what they were seeing, they still saw Jesus as being equal to Elijah and Moses. It's like they were saying, "Wow! Jesus, you're one of the three great leaders of Israel. "You are as great as Moses and Elijah were. And, now God has brought them back --so, let's triumph again. Let's use this as a base and bring our people to victory again!" That's the implication of their words: that Jesus should make Israel as great as it had once been when Moses and Elijah were here.

So, Peter called Jesus, "Rabbi" in **v. 5**. That means teacher. Do you see it? They thought that, in these three men in front of them, they had 1) the great lawgiver, 2) the great prophet and 3) the great teacher. "We like this Jesus! This is a whole lot better than all your talk about suffering, dying and crucifixion (from **Mk 8:31-32** that Pastor Jeff preached about last week).

But, rabbi though he was, Jesus was no mere rabbi. Nor was he simply one of three great men. See **vv. 7-8**: *Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them, no one except Jesus.*

And, don't miss this: In the very next verse, v. 9, Jesus said again that he will die. And, **vv. 12-13**, Jesus insisted that he would soon suffer and be rejected in this world. And, the disciples were confused. **How could this radiant and glorious man also be a rejected, suffering, and dying man? They saw -- but did not understand.**

So, do you understand? The point is that **this man they had been with for 3 years was fully human.** He had lived in poverty. He had experienced trials and temptations. He had wept. **But, he was also fully God** – in control of the entire universe. He could speak, and the winds and waves obeyed. He had the power to accomplish the mission he had come to earth to accomplish. Do you see and understand more about him now? Jesus is both fully man come to the world to live with us and die for us. To change things in this world, he had to enter into the wrongs and injustices in this world. At the same time, he is God who promises to end death and abolish all the effects of sin. Jesus took his disciples up onto the mountain so that they could see that he was and is both.

I spoke last week with my artist son, Brandon, about how one reality might be seen in more than one way depending on your perspective. He referred me to a **newer movement among artists called "Perceptual Shift."** Modern sculptors in the movement are creating works that show us how approaching the same work of art from differing perspectives can expand our understanding of reality: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fd1GoiK3rk>

So, the disciples saw Jesus from a different perspective on that mountaintop. He was still the same Jesus they had been with – who experienced all the trials and temptations of this world (though without sin). But, now they had also seen his shekinah glory. Would they understand what they had seen? Would they understand that Jesus is both human and divine? Being human, he had chosen to enter into and experience the

evils of this world in order to redeem us. And, being God, he would be able to defeat the evil – even death itself. From that, they should have understood that, although there will continue to be difficulties now, that glory is and glory was coming. God’s glory would someday come in its fullness.

So, Jesus indicated, they would have to go back down the mountain and into the world where he would die. And, they would have to follow him wherever he would lead. So, the disciples had seen both Jesus’s humanity and his glorious deity. They now had to understand the implications of what they had seen.

And, they needed to do one more thing: They needed to see – to understand – and to respond.

3. Respond -- *“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him (9:7)!”*

Listen to Jesus! This means to hear what he says and be directed and changed by him. Let Jesus be the voice that directs your life. When you have a decision you have to make, listen first to him. When you want someone shaping your life, don’t let it be a great celebrity but let that main influence be Jesus. God was saying to the disciples that they won’t find God’s kingdom by going back to the days of Elijah and Moses. Elijah and Moses were only pointing toward the coming of Jesus. What is in the past is still incomplete. What was back then was not so great anyway. Not for Moses. Not for Elijah. Not for us either. We thank God for a great heritage – but Jesus constantly leads us forward into a new kingdom – not backward. The kingdom of God is still coming. We’ll still face challenges in our future – but Jesus’s glory is real, and glory is coming.

Churches have always been marked by looking back – to the days when it seems that everything was more comfortable and defined. “Let’s build three shelters and stay here – one for Waybright, one for Ortlund or Cedar or Kirk or Hutchens...? No! We have been sent into this world and this time to live with Jesus and to bring the gospel of Jesus into the challenges of our world. One in Christ with one another, we must go out in unity into our world and address the issues of our day -- bringing the person, the message, the love and the reconciling work of Jesus to our world and all that’s happening in it.

I cannot tell you with specificity where Jesus will lead our church family. But, I know this – it will be to a place that is more like his kingdom than it is now and than it ever has been before. God loves this world – with all its issues related to immigration, sexual orientation, abuse of power, etc., etc. But this is the world God has created us for and sent us into. And, who is with us? The one who is with us is fully human and therefore knows how hard it is – but he is the one who bears the shekinah glory of God. We go in his name

So, after descending from the glory of the mountaintop experience, these disciples enter back into the cold harsh realities of this fallen world. Jesus had been preparing them for it by saying that he was coming back to die. But, they wanted none of that. They only wanted the glory. But, Jesus says – first the suffering and death and then the glory. “I will die but I will rise again.” I will do both. And, you will too.

So, Jesus takes his disciples from that mountaintop place of seeing his power, majesty and glory back down the hill into this fallen world as it is. He thereby lets them and us know that there is still a lot of work to do until the kingdom of God arrives fully – but, even while we will have to live in this world, Jesus will still be Jesus – We must see him both crucified and risen if we will see him aright.

In our Lenten journey this year, we will move next week all the way to Mk 10:17-31 and the story of the rich young ruler. So, this week, I urge you to read on your own Mk 9:14 – 10:16. Now that you have seen the shekinah glory of Jesus, you will see the difference that this makes in the lives of Christians. Let me tip you off to what you will see:

- **You will see that failures will be made useful again** (9:14-32).

The disciples come down the mountain and their disciple-colleagues could not do what Jesus had empowered them to do, i.e., liberate a boy from the oppression of an evil spirit. In this case, Jesus says the problem was a lack of faith. But, Jesus is that glorious Jesus we saw on the mountaintop. Jesus set the boy free. Please notice, however, that Jesus did not give up on these disciples even though they had failed. No, he would not leave them where they were either. They needed to learn about faith and grow in their own faith. It’s so beautiful -- Jesus would use these same failures to launch the church.

The point is: When you turn from your faithlessness and renew your trust in Jesus, you will experience that he forgives you and uses you again. So, you may have failed yesterday, but glory is still coming!

- **You will see that people who are viewed as low in the world are lifted up** (9:33-37; 10:42-49).

You'll see two passages dealing with little children. The 1st C was not a children-friendly world. The main cultures of the world did not value children at all. And, the disciples had imbibed the values of their culture. But, Jesus valued children. And, those who follow him must do the same. When we see Jesus as he is, we will see people as Jesus sees them, i.e., as image bearers of God and potential new creations in Christ.

So, if you feel devalued in this world because of age, race, appearance, or any other reason -- let me tell you that Jesus sees you, knows you and loves you to his death. May that be true of us as his followers. For, people in this world may be put down today, but a new day of glory is coming!

- **You will see that those who were outsiders will be brought inside** (9:38-41).

A man who was not a part of the disciples, maybe not even of their ethnicity, was able to do what the disciples had not been able to do, cast out demons. The disciples didn't like it. But Jesus makes it clear that those who live and speak "in his name" are no longer outsiders. No, like this man in 9:38, in Jesus you not only belong but you become a full participant in the work of God. When we have seen Jesus and listen to him, we discover that the basis for belonging in God's family is our relationship to Jesus. So, let me tell you today that, you may feel alone and alienated in this world – even right now in our own church family – but that will not last forever. Glory is coming! And the glory of the work of Jesus is that people from every tribe, language and nation become full members of the family of God – in Christ.

Know this today: We who follow Jesus sometimes will still experience failure, rejection and alienation as Jesus did. At this point in Mark's gospel, the disciples were not yet ready to hear this part of the story. They only cared about success now. But, I hope you see and understand more now than those disciples did. I pray that, having seen Jesus as God's Word reveals him to be, you will leave church today knowing that Jesus is with you and never forsakes you. He's not done with his work yet so you will face challenges. But, I pray you will be able to live this week with hope and confidence, walking on faithfully through the "dangers, toils and snares" of this world – because it may sometimes be hard now, but, Jesus's glory is real – and the fullness of his glory is still a-coming.