

The Transfiguration

The Gospel According to Mark Part 18

Mark 9:2-13

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 2.26.20

An experience you will remember forever

- What's something that you've seen or experienced, that was so amazing, you will never forget it for the rest of your life?
 - Disney World
 - Concert
- An experience I will always remember happened when I was in elementary school. We came home from church on a Sunday afternoon, and our neighbor's house was on fire. Immediately my mom called 911, and my dad drove to the neighbor's house, and banged on doors and windows to see if anyone was home. This stuck with me. At that young age I learned that there are times we risk our own safety to help others.
- In the passage we will study tonight (*Mark 9:2-13*), the story of the Transfiguration, three of Jesus' disciples will witness something so amazing, that they will remember forever.
- In fact, Peter, in the last letter he ever wrote, reflects on his experience witnessing the Transfiguration of Jesus.
 - *2 Peter 1:16-18* - "**16** For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." **18** We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."
 - Peter witnesses a lot of amazing things. He saw Jesus walk on water (*Mark 6:45-56*). He witnessed Jesus feed 5,000 people (*Mark 6:30-41*). He saw Jesus calm a storm (*Mark 4:35-41*). He saw the dead raised (*Mark 5:41*), the sick healed (*Mark 5:29*), and demons cast out (*Mark 5:13*). But in the last letter he ever wrote, he recalled this experience with Jesus.
 - Hearing the voice of God was life-changing for Peter. The Transfiguration of Jesus left a great impression on him.

Mark 9:2-13

- Context of *Mark 9:2-13*
 - In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke we see three back-to-back-to-back episodes, in the same order.
 - The announcement of Jesus as Messiah (*Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30, Luke 9:18-20*)
 - Jesus predicts his death (*Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 8:31-33, Luke 9:21-27*)
 - Jesus' Transfiguration (*Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36*)

- These stories are all connected to Jesus' identity and vocation.
- *Mark 9:2a* - "After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone."
 - Of the 12 Apostles, Jesus had, what seemed to be, a close relationship with Peter, James, and John.¹
 - These disciples are the three who witness Jesus heal Jairus's daughter (*Mark 5:37*) and Jesus' praying and agony at Gethsemane (*Mark 14:33*).
 - These three disciples also misunderstand Jesus' identity and vocation.
 - Peter is called Satan by Jesus because he rebukes Jesus when Jesus said the Son of Man must die (*Mark 8:32-33*).
 - Jesus also criticizes James and John when they are more interested in power than service (*Mark 10:35-37*).
 - Six days after what?
 - After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, and after Jesus taught on discipleship (people who want to be disciples of Jesus must "take up their cross[es] and follow me [Him]" (*Mark 8:34*).
 - This mountain was likely Mount Hermon or Mount Tabor.²
 - "High mountains are places of special revelation in the Bible."³
 - Moses on the mountain receiving the Law (*Exodus 19*); Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*)
- *Mark 9:2b-3* - There he was transfigured before them. **3** His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.
 - "The term *transfigured* literally means *altered* or *changed* (Greek = *metamorphhein*). Jesus' metamorphosis is evident in the changing color of his clothes, which became dazzling white."⁴
 - When I think of the Transfiguration, I think of Edward Cullen in *Twilight*.
 - Imagine how you would react if someone transfigured in front of you.
- *Mark 9:4* - "And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus."
 - Elijah and Moses appear. These were two of the most influential figures in the Old Testament and Jewish history.
 - Moses - led the Israelites out of Egypt (slavery) to the Promised Land, and through Him, God gave His people the Law
 - Elijah - most famous prophet in Israel's history. He did not die, but went to heaven in a fiery chariot (*2 Kings 2*)
 - These disciples' minds were blown. These weren't just the most famous people alive, but the most famous people in history.
 - For us think: George Washington, William Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln, Aristotle

¹ Pheme Perkins, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. VII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2015), 476.

² David Young, *Extreme Discipleship: Following Jesus from the Gospel of Mark* (Montgomery, AL: E-BookTime, LLC, 2007), 147.

³ Young, *Extreme Discipleship*, 147.

⁴ Young, *Extreme Discipleship*, 148.

- *Mark 9:5-6* - “**5** 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.’ **6** (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)”
 - I would be frightened, too.
 - He didn’t know what else to say, so Peter says it’s good to be here (Peter isn’t the type to deal with silence well).
 - Peter then suggests that they build three shelters—one for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses.
 - The words *tent* or *tabernacle* could be used here.
 - This, in Peter’s mind, would be honoring Jesus. Peter is saying that Jesus is as great as Moses and Elijah. He’s placing Jesus and Elijah and Moses on the same level. (although we will eventually see that Jesus is greater than both Elijah and Moses).
- *Mark 5:7* - “Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’”
 - For a Jewish person, their minds would go immediately to the promise of God in *Deuteronomy 18:15* - “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.”⁵
 - Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah. Jesus is God’s Son, who came to earth to rescue people. He is the great one whom we should listen to.
 - Where else have we heard something similar in the Gospel According to Mark?
 - Jesus’ baptism - *Mark 1:9-11*
- *Mark 9:8* - “Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.”
 - Everyone disappeared but Jesus, James, John, and Peter.
- *Mark 9:9-10* - “**9** 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. **10** They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what ‘rising from the dead’ meant.”
 - This is another appearance of the Messianic Secret. Jesus wanted His identity to be kept a secret for the time being. His time would come, but not yet.
 - The disciples discussed amongst themselves what this “rising” from the dead claim was all about.
- *Mark 9:11* - “And they asked him, ‘Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?’”
 - “The question put to Jesus about the coming of Elijah returns to the theme of judgement. Elijah, it was said, would precede the Lord’s coming in judgement (*Malachi 3:23-24*). *Daniel 12:2-3* indicates that resurrection is linked to the end-time judgement.”⁶
 - Jesus had already been confused with Elijah in the Gospel According to Mark (*Mark 6:15, 8:28*).
- *Mark 9:12-13* - “**12** Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all

⁵ Perkins, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. VII, 477.

⁶ Perkins, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. VII, 477.

things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? **13** But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

- Jesus confirms that the Son of Man will suffer many things (Jesus had already made this claim in *Mark 8:31*).
- Jesus claims that Elijah did come: John the Baptist.⁷

3 Takeaways from *Mark 9:2-13*

Jesus is God.

- One thing this text proves is Jesus is divine. Jesus is God.
- *Mark 9:2-3* – Jesus was Transfigured - Tim Keller - “Jesus produces the unsurpassable glory of God; it emanates from him. Jesus does not *point to* the glory of God as Elijah, Moses, and every other prophet has done; Jesus *is* the glory of God in human form.”⁸
- *Exodus 33-34*
 - Moses’ face shone because he witnessed the glory of God.
 - Moses received God’s glory “second hand.” Jesus’ glory came from himself.
 - Sun/moon
- *John 1:14* - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- This is to show the disciples that Jesus is God, that he is divine.

Jesus is to be worshiped.

- This text also teaches that Jesus is to be worshipped.
- Jesus is not on the same level as Moses and Elijah. He’s greater.
 - When Peter asked to make the three tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, Peter was trying to give a huge compliment to Jesus. Peter was communicating to Jesus that he was as great as those guys. But Jesus is greater.
- Our worshipping of God is what carries us throughout the rest of our lives.
- They do not stay up on the mountain. They go back down.
 - Mountain top/valley moments
- Encountering God in worship sustains you until you get back to him.
- Do you come to the Father in worship to check it off a list, or for nourishment?
- Jesus goes with us from the mountain top back to the real world.
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Jesus is to be heard.

- This passage teaches explicitly that we are to listen to Jesus.
- God came from and spoke from the cloud. The Israelites would have known that in the wilderness God’s presence was in the cloud.
- *Mark 5:7* - “and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’”

⁷ Perkins, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. VII, 477.

⁸ Timothy Keller, *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 113.

- This is a sound you can not ignore.
- If you're like me, you want to listen to Jesus, but at times it's hard, you don't want to, or you get distracted.
- What voices do we listen to today, instead of Jesus?
 - The voice that says you've got to make as much money as you can.
 - The voice that says you've got to do what makes you happy at all costs, that pleasure is the ultimate goal.
 - The voice that says your worth is what you do. The voice that says your worth is what people think of you. The voice that says your worth is your power, position, and wealth.
 - This one gets me very often.
 - The voice that says money is the answer to your problems.
 - The voice that says politics is the answer to your problems.
 - The voice that says I don't have to love those who are different from me, or that they're undeserving of love.
 - Those who don't pursue college
 - Poor
 - Different race
 - Different political affiliations
- There are so many voices out there today. It's hard to listen to Jesus.
 - Sometimes I feel like there's 4 people trying to talk with me at once.
- How do we listen to Jesus? This is so simple, but it is not easy.
 - Scripture
 - Prayer
 - Christian Community
 - God does not save us alone. He wants us to be a part of a community of believers.
 - I don't know of a single mature Christian who is not in the Word, in prayer, and in a community of believers.

How can you embrace this teaching?

- What would it look like if you took this passage of scripture seriously?
- We would worship Jesus.
 - We would acknowledge that He is God, and that he came for us.
- We would listen to Him.
 - We would care way more about what Jesus says than what others say.