

## **2-28-21**

Sermon- No Idea How To Respond

Scripture- Mark 9:2-9, CTW PS 50:1-6

Hymns- 64, 114, 576

Theme- Contemplation of the Glory of Jesus is something we all need to do in order to understand it for ourselves and then be able to explain it to others as we share the Gospel. Do not turn away from that bright light!

### **Introduction: The Turning Point**

**A. This morning I'd like for us to think about a turning point – a pivotal moment in our lives in which we change direction, for better or for worse.**

This morning it is the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ that proves to be a turning point in his life and the lives of his closest friends. It was the road less traveled by that made all the difference.

For the early church, the Transfiguration served as a restatement that Jesus was the son of God, and that he had the authority to speak and act in God's name.

Up to now, he'd been teaching, preaching and healing in the area north of the Sea of Galilee. After the Transfiguration, all that stopped. He came down the mountain and headed south. As Luke put it, "He intently set his face to go to Jerusalem." **Luke 9:51**

On Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup>, we began our Lenten Journey on Ash Wednesday and from there we move through the Lenten Season to Holy Week and the Cross.

This morning I want to speak to the significance of several observations we need to take with us from our text today.

### **I. What is the significance of Jesus taking Peter, James and John with him?**

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched Jesus'

appearance was transformed and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could make them. **Mark 9:2-3**

**A. The story started off ordinary enough.** Jesus and his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John, went up on a high mountain. Nothing unusual. Jesus often went off from the crowds to pray and rest. All very ordinary.

But from here on, ordinary ends. No sooner do they arrive than Jesus is suddenly "Transfigured." He "glowed." As the text has it, "his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them."

This event is not only out of the ordinary, but absolutely other worldly and frightening, which, of course is precisely what the story wants to convey.

It was on the Mt. of Transfiguration that Peter, James and John experienced things that shaped their lives for the rest of their lives.

Think about your own life: Have you had a moment or occurrence in your life that could compare?

The second question that comes to mind is:

## **II. What is the significance of the appearance of Elijah and Moses?**

Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. **Mark 9:4**

**A. Theologians and commentators alike point out that the presence of Moses and Elijah, along with Jesus, is intended to demonstrate how the Old Testament Law and the Old Testament Prophets come together in Christ.**

In **Matthew 5:17** Jesus said, "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the writings of the Prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose."

It was important for Peter, James and John (and us) to see that Jesus did not come to slam the door on the Old Testament relegating it to the dustbin of history while opening a new door to

the future. The Old and New Testaments are the complete Word of God... the Old Testament Law and the Old Testament Prophets are embraced and affirmed and fulfilled in Jesus.

That is why when we read **Mark 9:7-8** that after God, having affirmed Jesus as his dearly loved Son, instructed them (and us) to "Listen to Him," and then when Peter, James and John looked around. "Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them."

Mother Teresa once said, "You will never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you've got (or need)." And Jesus reminds us in **John 14:6** that he truly is all we've got in saying, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through me."

God wants us to see Jesus only.

The third question that comes to mind as we make our way through the text is:

### **III. What is the significance of Peter's comment?**

Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. **Mark 9:5-6**

**A. This week I read a commentary that said among the apostles, the one absolutely stunning success was Judas, and the one glaring failure was Peter!**

Judas was a success in the ways that most impress us: he was successful both financially and politically. He cleverly arranged to control the money of the apostolic band; he skillfully manipulated the political forces of the day to accomplish his goal.

Peter on the other hand, was supposedly a failure in ways that we most dread: he was impotent in a crisis and socially inept. At the arrest of Jesus he was hapless, blustering and impulsive to a fault in the most critical situations of his life.

From hacking off the servant's ear in the Garden of Gethsemane to flopping at walking on the water, and now in our text he said the most embarrassingly inappropriate things.

Time, of course, has reversed our judgments on the two men. Judas is now a byword for betrayal, and Peter is one of the most honored names in church and world. Judas is a villain; Peter is a saint.

Peter's gaff in speaking when he couldn't think of anything else to say is a word of grace to us... fowl ups and misspoken words and other sorts of embarrassment do not ultimately define who we are and who we may become.

In fact, it was his bumbling comment that opened the way for God to speak truth, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him."

Perhaps the most important aspect of the story today is the significance of the Voice. They all heard the same voice that we should be listening for.

#### **IV. What is the significance of the Voice?**

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus. **Mark 9:7-8**

In **Mark 8:27-29** Jesus had a conversation with his disciples as they walked along. Jesus asked two questions: "Who do people say I am?" and "Who do you say I am?"

**A. Jesus' true identify is of utmost importance.** It was a critical question then and it is a critical question now... there are lots of names and faces and voices that are vying to be the number one love and loyalty in our lives so Jesus needs to be head and shoulders above all the rest.

The Bible says almost nothing about the physical appearance of Jesus. What it does say is far different than what we may think: "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:2

**B. And yet, the greatness and glory of God are most clearly displayed in his Son.** In **Colossians 1:15** we read, "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God." and it is God's desire that we be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In

**Romans 8:29** Paul said: “For God knew his people in advance, and he chose us to become like his Son.”

So our perception of who Jesus is and what Jesus is like is of primary importance. Just as God wanted Peter, James and John to know who Jesus is and what Jesus is like, God wants us to know who Jesus is and what Jesus is like.

It is unfortunate that many have created Jesus in an image of their liking... in some cases creating a Jesus in their own image.

There’s the **Political Jesus** who is concerned about budget deficits, tax increases and appointing activist judges and focuses on family values and the right to own firearms.

There's the other **Political Jesus** who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart but **for** Main Street, all things “green” and Medicare for all.

There's **Therapist Jesus** who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

There's **Starbucks Jesus** who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a Prius, and goes to film festivals.

There's **Open-minded Jesus** who loves everyone all the time no matter what, **except of course** for people who are **not open-minded**.

There's **Touchdown Jesus** who helps athletes fun faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

There's **Platitude Jesus** good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and inspiring people to believe in themselves.

There's **Revolutionary Jesus** who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, seize every opportunity to march in protest, and blame things on "the system."

**And then there's Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.**

This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is the Father's Son, Savior of the world, and substitute for our sins—more loving, more holy,

and more wonderfully merciful, gracious and loving than we ever thought possible.

**C. While God may speak to us in any number of ways, God is speaking to us in our text this morning... one way we learn to recognize the voice of God is by reading and reflecting on God's Word.**

And God's Word to us today is that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. That is the significance of the "Cloud" and the "Voice." God was present there in the Cloud on that mountain and it God's Voice that we hear declare, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

And then when all the fireworks were over the only thing left to do was go home. Mark wrote, "...they went back down the mountain." So in closing, What is the significance of leaving the mountain?

## **V. Conclusion**

**A. What happened on the mountain is not intended to stay on the mountain.** It is no great mystery. After all, life is lived in the valley, not on the mountain top. Things are different between mountain top life and valley life. If you read ahead a bit in Mark's gospel, the contrasts are stark. If you continue in **Mark 9** you will see that it got **real**, down in the valley, so to speak. One poet put it:

On the mountain, we encounter almighty God; in the valley, there is an encounter with the demonic. On the mountain we encounter our faith's heritage; in the valley, we encounter those who consider questions of faith as occasions for battle.

On the mountain, God's calming voice is heard; in the valley, human argument is heard. On the mountain, disciples are in a mood for worship; in the valley, the disciples are spoiling for a fight. On the mountain, the glory of God is revealed; in the valley, the power of sin and unbelief is revealed.

Having been to the mountain top this morning we are reminded that our place in life and ministry is with those who need our help down in the valley. It is by having been to the mountain top that

Peter, James and John were sustained for life and ministry in the valley of life. **And it is by the same way that we too are sustained for life here in the valley. Amen? Let Us Pray...**