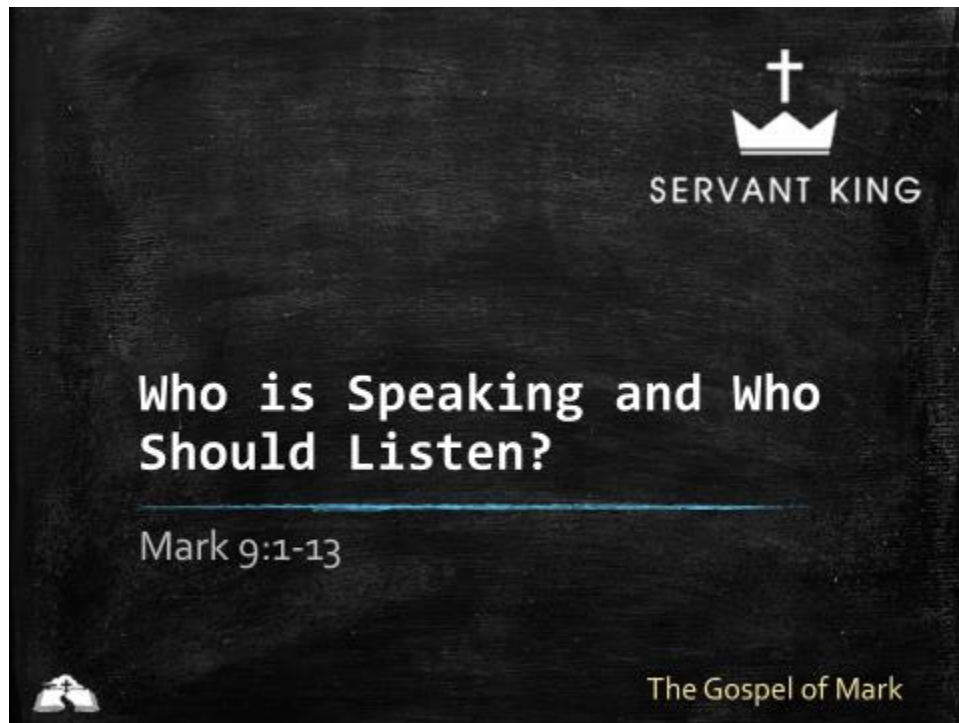


Who is Speaking and Who Should Listen?

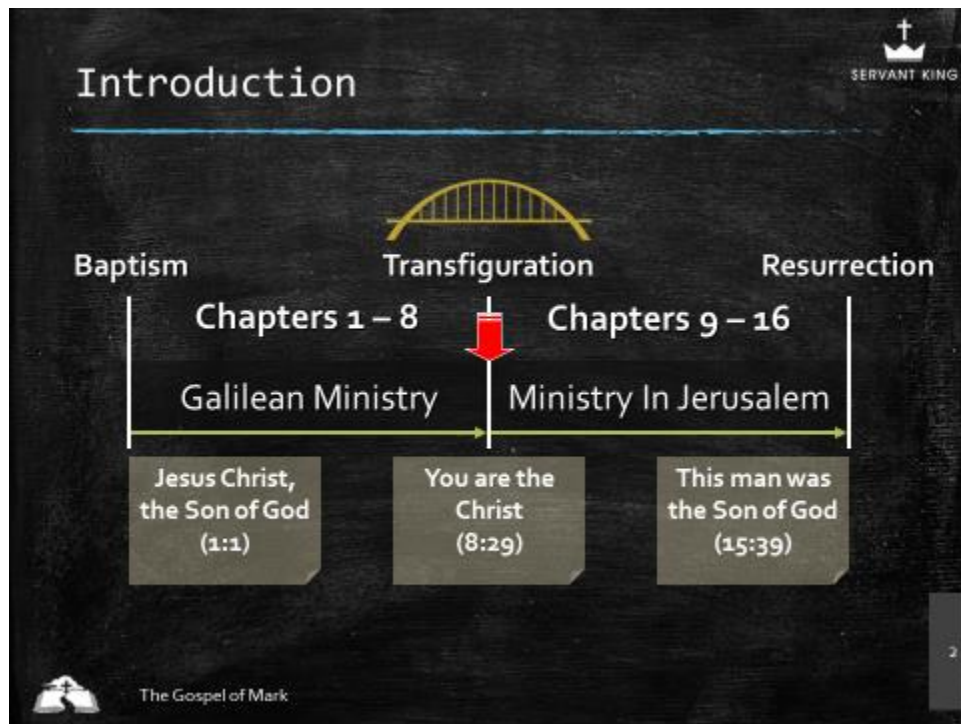
Mark 9:1-13

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Speaker: Pastor Mark Schindler



I think we've all had one of those moments when we are in a large group of people waiting for a meeting or some event to start. Several small groups of conversation form, soon everyone is talking loudly to be heard over the buzz of the room. As the leader of the meeting walks in and prepares to start, usually the small groups of conversation die down and you get started. But sometimes there's this one group. You know that one chatty set of people, or that one person, who misses the obvious cues and continues to talk and jabber loudly when they should have quieted down and started listening. It's one of those awkward moments; especially if you were the one that continued to talk after the room had gone silent. Suddenly you realize you've become the center of attention in the wrong way and wish you could hide.



That’s the kind of moment that Peter is going to have in our passage this morning. Peter’s bold, quick to speak personality provides Mark an object lesson we all can learn from. So we are going to pick up in Chapter 9 as we continue this series through the Gospel of Mark.

It is important to note that our text this morning places us at the center of Mark’s Gospel. You should know that the book of Mark is structured into two halves. The first half is found in the first 8 chapters which cover Jesus’ ministry in an around Galilee. The second half is found in the last eight chapters which cover Jesus’ ministry in and around Jerusalem.

These halves are indicated around claims of who Jesus is, which is a major theme in Mark’s gospel. At the beginning of Chapter 1, Mark tells his readers that this is the good news of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Last week, in Chapter 8 we heard Peter say to Jesus, “You are the Christ.” And at the end of Mark’s Gospel in Chapter 15 we will hear the Roman centurion, a Gentile exclaim, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’ Today, in verse 1 of our passage, we arrive at a pivotal point in the text that provides a crucial bridge between the two halves.

As we move out of the last half of Mark’s account of Jesus’ ministry, we must consider the examples of those who believed Jesus was the Messiah and those who do not. There are those who have followed Jesus’ ministry, including the disciples, that have been slow to understand the true nature of His ministry. We have also seen the contrasts of the Jewish religious leaders, who though they knew the scriptures did not understand Jesus was the Christ. And we have seen several unclean Gentiles, who though they knew little of scripture were given faith and believed. Now as we enter in to the last half of Mark’s account, we begin to feel the greater sense of urgency for the disciples to see and understand as Jesus moves closer to the cross. And so this morning we will be crossing over that bridge and beginning the second half of Gospel of Mark.

You will find in Mark's account of the transfiguration this morning that there are many parallels to Jesus' baptism. It is not an accident that Mark begins the first half of his Gospel with an account that starts Jesus' journey of ministry here on earth and then begins the second half with a similar account that begins Jesus' journey to the cross. From this point on, Jesus and the disciples will quickly make their way along a journey that takes them Galilee to Jerusalem. And from Jerusalem to the cross.

If you remember, last week we looked at the previous passage and saw that the disciples are working through a process of understanding. Like the blind man, their eyes were open; yet they could not see clearly. Peter rightly calls Jesus the Christ; the Messiah. But quickly rebukes Jesus for saying that the Messiah would suffer. Their eyes were clouded by years of teaching that kept them from understanding the necessity for the Messiah to suffer and die. Remember that their upbringing and instruction on Old Testament prophecy led them to see the Messiah as a political ruler or King. What they do not see or understand at this point, is that the Messiah also came as a humble servant who would pour out His life upon a cross. Just as clear physical eyes allow us to see the world around us, we are like the disciples and need clear spiritual eyes to see the necessity and truth of the Gospel.

[opening prayer]

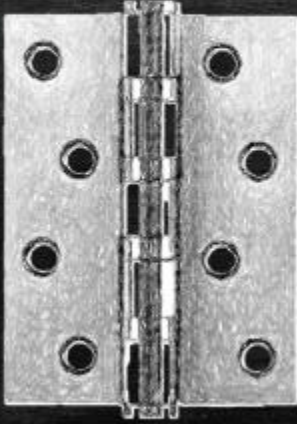
We are going to pick up on the same verse where Russ left off last week. So fasten your seatbelts. Peter, James, and John are about to experience another heart pounding, terrifying, and wonderful all-at-the-same time kind of moment with Jesus. Please turn to Mark 9, which is our text this morning. We will be reading and considering verses 1 through 13. Follow along as I read God's word to us.

"And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'" And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.'" For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him.'" And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. And they asked him, 'Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?'" And he said to them, 'Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.'"

A Failure to See (v. 1)

SERVANT KING

Mark 8:31-38
Peter does not see the servant nature of Jesus and the Messianic kingdom.



Mark 9:2-13
Peter does not see Jesus as the Old Testament fulfillment and revelation of the Messianic kingdom.

The Gospel of Mark

Let's start by looking at just the first verse of this passage. To understand this verse, we have to remember that it is a hinge on which the Mark is connecting the two halves of his Gospel. Remember in the passage last week, Mark showed us Peter, who like the other disciples, does not clearly see the servant nature of Jesus the Messianic Kingdom. And as we shall see in the very next section of this passage, Peter, again like the other disciples does not see Jesus as the fulfillment and revelation of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. This is the reason that Mark is connecting these two accounts.

The first verse of this passage can seem a little confusing. What does Jesus mean here? What does he mean that they shall see the Kingdom of God? Look again at verse 1. *"And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"*

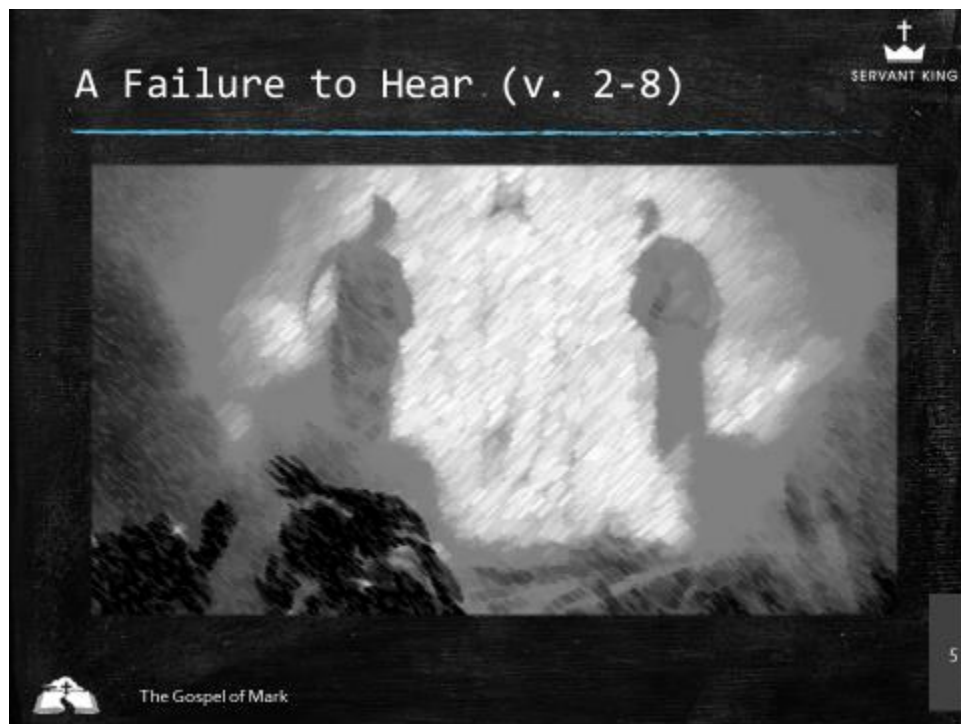
So let's look back at the last few verses of Chapter 8. Remember that Jesus had been plainly teaching them that He was going to suffer, be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed, and then rise again. Do you remember Peter's response? He rebuked Jesus for saying such things. So how does Jesus respond to Peter's rebuke? He connects the suffering of the Messiah with the suffering of those that would follow Him. In other words, He is saying "If you believe I am the Messiah and want to follow me, then you must have the same attitude of a servant and be willing to lose your life for the sake of the Gospel."

Here in verse 1, Jesus is again addressing their failure to see. The disciples did not yet see the coming of Jesus' kingdom beginning with His death. Instead of suffering and loss, they had been seeing their own power and position in the Messiah's royal order. If Jesus were to die, all that they understood the Messiah to be would die with him. Jesus understands their confusion and addresses the questions and doubts that were grinding inside their heads.

Jesus speaks with passion here and starts by saying “I am telling the truth.” The actual word here in the Greek is “Amen” meaning, “so it will be”. “Truly”, Jesus is saying, “my death is not the end of the Kingdom. In fact, there are some of you here right now who will see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” At this moment, the disciples could not see clearly. But they would see clearly before they died. I can almost hear Jesus thinking out loud. “I know this is hard for you to understand, but trust me. Be patient. You are going to see the kingdom come with power and glory.”

And in fact, we just read in our text this morning that their eyes were about to see the radiant Glory of the Son in just a few days, as Jesus is transfigured on the mountain. But that event is only a partial fulfillment of Jesus’ promise here. Because just as Jesus had told them that he was going to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. Before their eyes at the cross, there would be a coming together of the power, victory, glory of the coming of the Kingdom; the fulfillment of the law and prophecies; and the promised reign of the eternal King.

But just as the disciples needed their eyes to be opened to see the coming of Christ’s kingdom, so we also need our eyes to be opened to see the Glory of our Lord. Are we so different from the disciples? We want all the benefits of the Kingdom and none of the cost. We want all the blessings of the Christ and none of the cross. Like Peter, we publically confess Jesus as our Lord. But the moment something intrudes upon following Him, we rebuke Him with our choices and in essence tell Him he has it all wrong. Listen, if we claim Christ then we must claim him as Lord. Let us run after Him, so that we may give up our lives for the sake of the Gospel. And like the true disciples in Mark’s account, we too will one-day see the Glory of the Kingdom of our Lord.



As we see in the next section of verses, Mark immediately takes us to the initial fulfillment of Jesus' promise in verse 1. He tells us that Jesus took three of the disciples up a mountain and is then transfigured before them. Follow along as I read starting in verse 2. *"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only."*

Mark's use of "after six days" is reminiscent of Moses' six-day journey up Mount Sinai and connects us directly back to Peter's earlier confession of Jesus as the Messiah. So this journey up the mountain is six days after Peter proclaims Jesus as Messiah. And while Peter was correct in identifying Jesus' identity, it did not go far enough. Peter was seeing, but he wasn't seeing clearly. Peter could not envision a Messiah who would die the worst kind of criminal's death. But whatever Peter, James, and John were thinking as they followed Jesus up a mountain side, they probably had no idea of what Jesus was going to show them about His true nature. And Mark is about to show us that not only is there a failure to see, there is also a failure to hear.

The mountain setting here reminds us of God speaking to Moses and the Israelites from Mount Sinai. We should also consider that in the Gospels, Jesus is often found on mountains where He prays, preaches, and performs miracles. The significance should not be lost on us here. Mountains are a place in scripture where people encountered God. The high mountain here is no different, as Jesus and the three disciples climb to the place where Jesus will soon disclose Himself to them. This is a moment of revelation that will begin the transformation of the disciples understanding of who Jesus is. And just as Jesus' baptism sets in motion the first half of Mark's gospel, so Jesus' transfiguration sets in motion not only Jesus' journey to the cross, but the disciples journey to understanding the true nature of the Messiah.

The account of the transfiguration here is majestic and full of meaning. As the disciples stand watching, Jesus clothes' become a brilliant and blazingly white. There is a visual transformation in Jesus that flows out of His being. As the disciples watch, they see a change in His appearance that reflects His divine nature. Again, we are reminded of the face of Moses which glowed after his encounter with God and His divine glory on Mount Sinai. So powerful and dramatic is this transformation in Jesus that the disciples are scared and frightened. The disciples have seen Jesus calm storms and seas. They watched as he cast demons into pigs. But I would imagine that the level of fear in this moment was greater than anything they had experienced to this point.

As Jesus appearance is transformed before them, two figures appear with Jesus and talk to Him. The symbolism of these two great figures of the Old Testament represent forerunners to the Messiah. The presence and witness of Elijah and Moses attest to the credibility of Jesus claims and ministry. He is not some Johnny-come-lately to the scene. Jesus talks with them establishing a pre-existing relationship that points us to His eternal and superior nature as well as His fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Moses representing the Law and the one who brought

it from Mount Sinai to the nation of Israel. Elijah representing the Prophets and one who turned the hearts of Israel back to God.

Here on the mountain top scene, God brings Jesus to meet and speak with these two great men of faith before the disciples. Mark tells us that Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus. The picture here is of Jesus holding their attention and having a superior position. Elijah and Moses are witnesses and servants. This moment is all about Jesus. Peter, James, and John are seeing something that would be unbelievable were they not there.

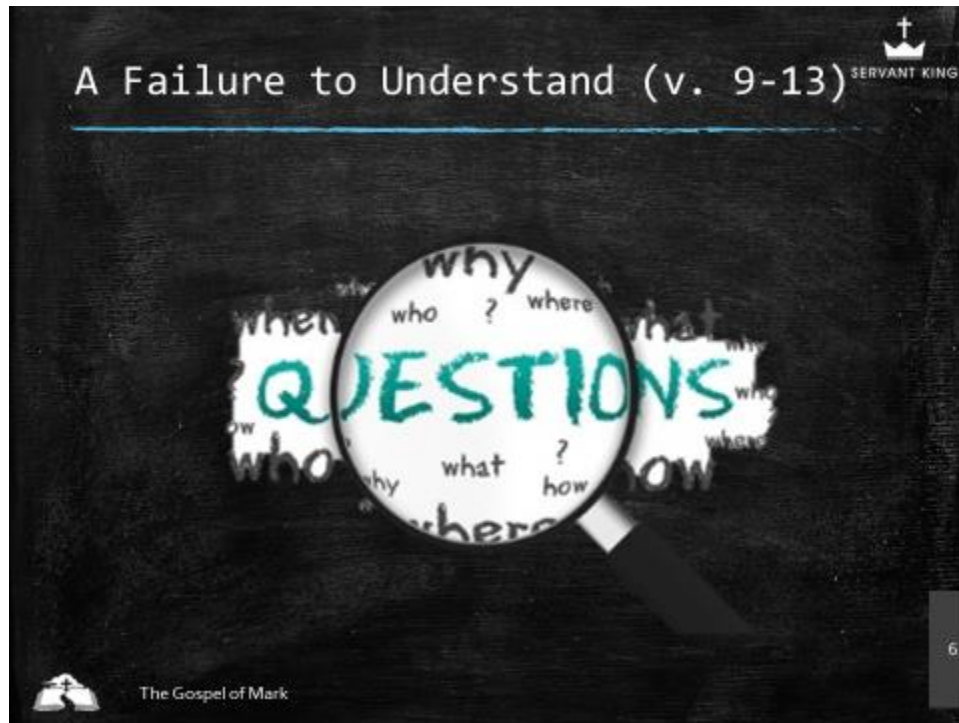
Somehow, in the midst of this surreal setting, Peter decides that rather than watching and listening, he should talk. It's hard to know why Peter speaks up. Mark tells us that they were terrified. So perhaps in his frightened state, Peter impulsively blurts out what he is thinking. Perhaps in this moment he is behaving no differently than anyone of us who when meeting someone important say all the wrong things as our brain turns to mush. His suggestion to build tents or booths here is not foolish for someone brought up as a Jew. But he is jumping to wrong conclusions because he is failing to listen and understand. Jesus does not need a place to dwell. In fact, the irony here is that Jesus came to make His dwelling place with man not in a physical place, but within our hearts.

If the disciples were terrified, what happens next fills their hearts with even greater fear. As they stand there a cloud overshadows the mountain. Again, we recall the cloud at Mount Sinai indicating the presence of God. Out of the cloud comes a voice that says, "This is my beloved Son; listen to Him." God the Father gives both a proclamation and a command. We should note the difference here from God's voice at Jesus baptism. There God is speaking to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son." Here the proclamation is directed at the disciples, as is the command to listen to Jesus. The Father is affirming and approving Jesus His Son as the Messiah. Just as the nation of Israel was called to listen to Moses at Mount Sinai, the disciples are being called to listen to Jesus.

All this is in contrast to Peter, who couldn't wait and started talking when he should have been listening. The command to listen must be connected to Jesus' words to the disciples in Chapter 8. The implication here is a divine call to heed the words of Jesus that he would die and rise again before He would be glorified. The Messiah was to be rejected and suffer as a part of securing His kingdom. The truths that Peter had rejected and rebuked Jesus for were actually to be listened to. Peter not only did not see, but he did not listen. For Jesus, the journey to glory and the kingdom had to go through suffering and the cross. And those would follow him were called to serve, to suffer, and to take up their own cross for the glory of God. For the disciples to understand this, they would have to listen.

The lessons here for us are no different. We are called to listen to Jesus as the one who comes with authority. We are called to hear the Gospel and follow after our Lord even down paths of suffering and hardship. We are to listen and understand that following Christ will come with a cost. We are to listen because God has given us the Living word. No longer written on tablets of stone, but written on our hearts. And in those times when we encounter God in prayer, in bible study, and in meditation, may our hearts be quiet so that we may listen and know that He is God.

Brothers and sisters, may God give us hearts that desire to behold His glory and worship in the presence of our eternal King.



Let's keep moving along and look at the final verses of this passage. Follow along as we read verses 9 through 13. *"And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.""*

Mark concludes the account by telling us of their journey back down the mountain. What we see here is that the disciples' failure to see and hear brings them to a failure to understand. As they descend, Jesus commands them not to tell anyone one what they have seen. The command to be silent after a miraculous event is a common theme in the first half of Mark's account.

Now there are two things to note here. First, this is the last time in Mark's account that Jesus gives a warning to not tell what has been seen. The command to be silent may have to do with the disciples' lack of understanding. It was best for them not to share what they had seen because they would not be able to correctly put what they had seen and heard on the mountain in its proper context. The second thing to note is that this is the first time Jesus gives this command with a condition. They are to be silent until Jesus has risen from the dead. What the disciples don't know yet is that the cross and resurrection is the key to understanding the Messiah's mission. Without the crucifixion and empty tomb, the disciples would not be able to fully understand what they had just witnessed.

The disciples lack of understanding is highlighted by their continued questioning and discussions as they made their way back down. If they had unanswered questions and confusion on the way up the mountain side, imagine what was going through their heads after witnessing Jesus' transfiguration. Mark gives us this sense as he tells us that they still were trying to figure out what it meant that Jesus would rise from the dead. Their understanding of the Messiah simply did not allow for Him to die. But we also get the sense that they were discussing what they had just seen and why Moses and Elijah had appeared.

So they ask Jesus, why do the scriptures say that Elijah must come first. The asking of this question illustrates their confusion and connects us back to Peter's confusion about the Messiah coming to suffer and die. It's a leading question. In the disciples' minds, Elijah's coming first meant that his return brought about the restoration of all things. If the restoration had occurred why would the Messiah, the Son of Man, need to suffer and die? Without the context of Jesus' eternal and greater purpose to restore and redeem mankind, it was a fair question.

In a nutshell, Jesus answers the question two ways. First, he affirms that they are correct. There will be a time and role for one who comes to restore righteousness and peace. And second, He reminds them that the scriptures also say that the Son of Man would suffer and be treated with contempt. The allusions here to Elijah and to John the Baptist's suffering would have been hard for the disciples to accept. They so wanted a Messiah who would save and restore His people, that they did not consider the scriptures that said he would also suffer. Even more, the connection to Jesus' response to Peter at the end of Chapter 8 meant that not only would the Messiah suffer, so would those who followed after Him. They were to understand that if the Messiah was to suffer and be mistreated, then so would they.

Reflect and Respond

- Mark speaks to the Jews
- Mark speaks to the lost
- Mark speaks to us

SERVANT KING

The Gospel of Mark

7

This morning's passage is only thirteen verses, but it is rich with meaning and application for us. I know that I've packed a lot into our study this morning so let me quickly conclude as we reflect and respond to this passage. Much like last week's theme of looking, but not seeing. We have an illustration in our text this morning of hearing, but not listening.

Our passage this morning should help us understand how the Jews looked at Jesus and His ministry. Most of them were either blind and did not want to see who Jesus was or they could not see clearly because of how they understood the fulfillment and coming of the Messiah in the Law and Prophets. They read the scriptures and heard what Jesus was saying. But what they heard was not interpreted in the context of the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Nor were many of them willing to walk down the same road as Jesus. And many of those who followed Jesus abandoned Him when he got nearer to the cross.

This passage should help us see those who are lost. There are many who are deceived and blind to the Gospel. They do not see their need for a savior and will not listen to the call to follow Christ. Others are looking, but do not see clearly because they follow a false Gospel. They either put their hopes in works and their own righteousness or they have been led astray by those who would add to or water down the Gospel. And there are many, perhaps some here today, that will fall away when it gets hard to follow Jesus, when it costs them something, or when the church comes under persecution. May we continue to pray and reach out to those who are lost that the veil may be lifted and their ears opened that they may yet see the power of the cross and be brought into the glory of Christ's kingdom.

Finally, this passage speaks to us today. Even in our belief we are prone to doubt and failures. Our hearts follow after other things rather than the glory of Christ. We fail to see the beauty and perfection of our Savior; fail to listen and obey our King. We either try and avoid suffering or complain about its presence in our lives. Like the disciples we want all the benefits of the Kingdom and none of the cost. We want all the blessings of the Christ and none of the cross.

We are also like the disciples in trying to interpret our lives without the context of the cross. Brothers and sisters, there is no fellowship with Christ without the cross. There is no restoration and peace with God without the crucifixion. There is no hope of heaven without Jesus' death and resurrection. When we are prone to look away from the cross, when we are prone to self-absorbed speech and fail to listen to His word, when we forget that the path to glory comes with suffering and rejection; let us look and see, let us hear and listen to all that Christ is to those who believe. Then we will overcome the weakest and worst of ourselves by finding our righteousness, courage, and strength in Him.

[closing prayer]

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