

Mark 9:2-13 A Glimpse of Glory Falls OPC PM August 21, 2022

Previously, Jesus summoned the disciples to wholehearted discipleship and had emphasized the cost of following Jesus. The disciples must bear their crosses, must deny themselves in loyalty to Jesus, as inescapable parts of the Christian life.

Yet Jesus had also hinted about another side to discipleship.

Along with loss was gain. Along with suffering was glory.

For example, in chapter 8, verse 35, “...*whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s [sake] will save it.*”

Anyone who took up his cross and lost his own life for God, would actually gain his own life. What does that mean?

It means that the life of the disciple has two sides. It includes suffering, but it also includes glory.

Sharing in the suffering of Christ, comes with sharing in the glory of Christ.

Denying yourself for Christ includes finding your all in Christ.

Taking up your cross for Christ means being in a position to share His glory.

Though Jesus did suffer and was killed, His glory compels us to listen to Him!

1. Seeing the glory of Jesus, of which we will one day partake. (v.2-6)

Consider the words of Jesus from our previous study, in chapter 9, verse 1, “*and [Jesus] 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.’*”

Jesus had said that some of the people standing there would see the power of the Kingdom of God, and that they would see that power during their lifetimes!

Now as we turn to our study in verse 2, we learn that six days later, Jesus led 3 of His disciples up a high mountain. So, our study of the events at the top of the mountain was only involving Jesus and these 3 disciples by name, Peter, James, and John. That makes 4 people total. What did Jesus bring those 3 men up the mountain in order to see or learn? They were to see Jesus transfigured.

The word here is metamorphosis, the same word we learned in science class to describe a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. It is to change the appearance.

They were allowed a rare privilege, a rare experience, to catch a brief glimpse of all that Jesus would be in the future when His kingdom finally came more fully. Jesus was changed. Jesus was transfigured. His appearance

His glory was seen! His power was seen!

His kingly majesty was temporarily visible to the 3 disciples!

Jesus gave 3 disciples an early preview of that day when God’s kingdom would come with power in the resurrection of Jesus. Romans 1:4, Jesus was, “...*declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness BY HIS RESURRECTION from the dead...*”

So, what did these 3 men see that day on that mountain? It was not a vision. Rather, as we read in verses 2 and 3, they were seeing Jesus, live, and in person, in the flesh, right in front of them, radiating with glory. While that happened, something else happened, as we discover in verse 4. Two dead Old Testament people arrived in order to talk with Jesus. Those men were Elijah, who had an experience on Mountain with God in 1 Kings 19, and Moses, who had an experience with God on the mountain in Exodus 34. Moses came down the mountain with a glow of glory that was reflected and temporary. But here Jesus' glory was intrinsic to Himself. We learn from the Gospel of Luke, that Elijah and Moses talked with Jesus about His departure in Jerusalem. The death of Jesus would be the new Passover. The salvation of His people would be the new Exodus.

In verse 5, Peter speaks. We could wish that Peter had not spoken at all. Remember what happened the last time Peter spoke? Chapter 8, verse 32, Peter rebuked Jesus for talking about being killed and rising again, and in chapter 8, 33, Jesus had to say the very strong rebuke that Peter was speaking like Satan, and that Peter did not have in mind the things of God, but rather the things of man.

As we recall that Peter objected to the suffering of Jesus, that gives us some understanding of the comment that Peter said here. Since Peter did not want Jesus to suffer and die, then the gathering of these people seemed like a possible way out of suffering and dying. Peter would like to seize the opportunity, and put up 3 tents, like the ancient tents of meeting for worshipping God, so that they could all stay there on the mountain!

Verse 6 shows that Peter was terrified, and so were James and John, and Peter did not know what to say any more than the others knew what to say.

Was it all over? Was this the end of the age? Has the Kingdom of God come to usher in the eternal future? Could they stay there with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus on top of that mountain, and call it heaven?

No. Peter James and John were seeing the glory of Jesus, of which they would one day partake, but it was not yet the time for glory. It was still the time for suffering. What they were seeing that day was only a glimpse of glory, a glimpse of future glory. There was something yet to be done prior to the full glorifying of Jesus. Jesus had to suffer, and Jesus had to be killed.

No wonder God the Father did something so rare and definitive here. No wonder God spoke so powerfully in both word and deed.

2. Listening to the Word of God, which explains everything. (v.7-8)

Verse 7, *“And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.’”*

Has there ever been a greater gathering for a theological conference? We have none other than Moses and Elijah from the Old Testament, Jesus Himself,

before His crucifixion, God the Father speaking from heaven, and three new testament apostles, Peter, James and John. But that is not enough. We also have for the first time in 600 years, the re-appearance of the glory-cloud, famous from the Old Testament days!

Many times in the Old Testament, God appeared to His people in a glory-cloud. For example, in Exodus 16, while the people were being led through the wilderness, the people were grumbling. We read this in Exodus 16, verses 9-10, *“Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’” 10 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.”* Then God spoke through that cloud.

Here in Mark chapter 9, we have God the Father speaking again through the glory-cloud, but this time God the Father did that while God the Son was on earth, and while Moses was appearing, while Elijah was appearing, and while three New Testament apostles, who later authored books of the New Testament, were also gathered.

It was in this context that the voice from heaven spoke. We know it was God the Father who spoke, because what the voice said was “My Son.”

What was it that God the Father spoke? God the Father was pointing to Jesus. God the Father was educating Peter, and the others and all of us about who Jesus is, and what Jesus must do. God the Father was explaining the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on that mountain.

This was a glorious moment.

Peter understood it all wrong, again.

Just as Jesus had rebuked Peter in chapter 8:33, so now God the Father was rebuking Peter in chapter 9:7. God the Father was telling Peter to listen to God the Son.

This gathering on the top of this mountain was not a way for Jesus to escape from suffering and the cross, rather this gathering on the top of this mountain was preparation for His suffering and His going to the cross.

Suffering is inescapable. Moses and Elijah had been called in to witness to and to confirm the need for a true Lamb of God to replace all of the previous sacrificial lambs and goats that pointed beyond themselves. No one can be saved from the wrath of God by the blood of animals.

Jesus must suffer. What about this suffering? Jesus had said it already in chapter 8:31, but Peter had not listened and had not understood and had not absorbed it. Jesus had taught *“that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days to rise again. And [Jesus] said this plainly.”*

Peter, focus your attention on Jesus, and on the fact that Jesus must suffer and die for the sins of God's people. All that happened through Moses and the Old Testament sacrifices will not save God's people, without Jesus coming to be the sacrifice.

As if to underline this focus on Jesus, we turn to verse 8 and find that Moses and Elijah have left. This happened right after the voice of God the Father from heaven spoke. We read in verse 8, "*And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*" It means that Peter and James and John no longer saw Moses and no longer saw Elijah.

This was one of the most sacred moments in all of the history of the world, and Peter, James, and John were there to see it. It was just as Jesus said in verse 1, that they would "see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." If only they would listen to Jesus, for Jesus is telling them truth. Jesus must suffer. Jesus must be killed. Jesus must rise again. This brings us to our third point.

3. Learning from the suffering of Jesus, by which we are restored. (v.9-13)

Verse 9, they were coming down the mountain. They had just been told audibly by God the Father to listen to Jesus. OK, here is a fresh opportunity to listen to Jesus. What would Jesus say, and would they listen? Jesus commanded them in verse 9 to tell no one what they had seen on the mountain, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They listened. They did what they were told, anyway, but they still struggled to learn.

Verse 10, "*So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.*"

They were obeying better. But they did not seem to be understanding much better! Only after the resurrection of Jesus would their eyes be fully opened. Only after Jesus would appear to them as the risen Lord and speak to them, would they understand that the power of God must be made known through the weakness of the cross.

In verse 11, they ask Jesus a question for their own understanding, "*Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?*"

One thing still puzzled the disciples. They had ascended the mountain with Jesus, and they had seen a glimpse of His glory and they had seen the kingdom of God with power. They had heard the voice of God the Father. They had been taught and corrected. But one thing still puzzled the disciples. Why must they keep silent about all of this? The resurrection would be the sign of the end of the world. When the resurrection happened, then they would know other things have been set into motion, such as the final judgment and the ushering in of the new age. If the resurrection was so near, then the disciples were still puzzled about why Elijah must come first. They were thinking of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of*

the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

In the minds of people for a few hundred years was that Elijah the prophet must appear first. First Elijah, then the Messiah, then the end.

If you remember, in chapter 8, verse 28, some people thought that Jesus was Elijah, who had come to start the process toward the end. Some people knew that Jesus was important, but they did not realize that He was the Messiah. So, here the disciples were asking how to interpret that passage to line up with what they saw on the mountain!

Jesus answered in verse 12. Elijah does come first. Elijah’s work is restoring. But that passage cannot be read in isolation from other passages in God’s Word. In verse 12, Jesus reminded them of other passages, such as *“how is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”*

Jesus was harmonizing all the passages for them. Elijah did come first, and that is done already. The Christ has come next, and that is Jesus. He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt. How does that all work?

Verse 13, *“But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”*

Jesus was showing them that the promised forerunner of Jesus was John the Baptist. Chapter 1, this book started with the ministry of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness. In Chapter 6, this book explained the death of John the Baptist by Herod, because John was preaching truth. John the Baptist was the one prophesied to come, who would be just like Elijah. The restoring work that John the Baptist was involved in, was not a restoring of government and politics and a human kingdom. Rather, it was the restoring of repentance, the restoring of hearts turned to God, the putting of the minds of people not on the things of man, but rather onto the things of God. This is what John the Baptist did in his preaching and his baptism of repentance. John prepared the way for the Messiah. John even introduced the Messiah, when John famously said, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* John 1:29. And, John the Baptist also said about Jesus, *‘I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.’* John 1:34.

The world’s response to John the Baptist was the foreshadowing about Christ. John the Baptist was rejected, foreshadowing that the Christ would be rejected. John the Baptist suffered, foreshadowing that the Christ must suffer. John the Baptist was killed, foreshadowing that the Son of Man must be killed.

This explanation must have made a lasting impression on Peter and James and John, because Mark wrote about it. How would Mark have learned about it? By the testimony of these three disciples, being given to Mark and all the disciples.

All the Scriptures made sense. The one like Elijah was not to be a government leader, and neither was The Christ. The one like Elijah had already come! The Christ was here right now! The people had been blind to Jesus being the Christ. When Peter had said that Jesus was the Christ, it was that moment that Peter was seeing only partially, like being able to see people like trees walking around. Peter could see Christ, but only partially.

Only after the Son of Man had risen from the dead would it be appropriate for them to share with others what had taken place on the mountain top. Only then would it be completed, that the Son of Man had victory over darkness and death.

As we wrap up our study tonight, we notice one theme of Mark's Gospel coming out again in tonight's passage – that the disciples loved and trusted Jesus, and the disciples believed that Jesus was The Christ, but they struggled to understand everything that it meant. Again and again, Jesus was opening their eyes to more and more truth.

Concluding Application:

1. Get a glimpse of glory in your Bible. It is natural for us when we study the transfiguration to desire the privilege of Peter, James and John, to wish that we had been on that mountain and heard the voice of God the Father pointing us to Jesus. But that is not what Peter later would say. In Peter's second letter to the church and to us, Peter wrote that the Bible is as clear and as powerful as any word that we might be able to hear spoken out loud from the sky. Peter wrote as an old man, and very close to his own death, when he wrote 2 Peter. Peter knew that he had received a privilege, and yet Peter knew that it was his special assignment to share the right perspective on the glimpse of glory that Peter had received. Listen carefully to Peter writing in 2 Peter 1:13-21, *"I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. 16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

What did Peter mean by these sentences? If we desire the privilege of seeing a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ now, we must read the Bible just as eagerly as Peter would have loved to build tents of meeting and stay literally on the mountain top experience. Peter is reminding us that the same voice speaks in both places! The same voice that Peter heard out loud, is the voice that speaks to us in the written words of the Bible. The same God the Father says the same message to us. "this is my beloved Son; listen to Him." And what is it that God the Son says to us? The same message God the Son Jesus Christ says to us in the Bible, as He taught to Peter. Listen to Jesus. Listen to Jesus for what to believe. Listen to Jesus for what to do.

2. Be willing to suffer while serving Christ. Christ still calls us to self-denial and promises to repay us for all of our suffering. Christ calls us to take up our cross, and assures us that we will not lose our souls. Christ asks us to follow Him, and reminds us that the Son of Man is coming one day soon in the glory of His Father and with the holy angels.

SI - a chaplain was speaking to a soldier on a cot in an army hospital. "You have lost an arm in the great cause," the chaplain said. "No," said the soldier with a smile. "I didn't lose my arm--I gave it."

The difference is willingness. The benefit of the glimpse of glory is that we have assurance that it is all true. Those who suffer with Christ, also share with Christ in His glory.

To consider the suffering of following Christ can be depressing when you are in the middle of it. The transfiguration is a gift that gives us a blast of encouragement to be willing to suffer. It will all be worth it. Because we are told in the Bible that the disciples stood on top of the world with Jesus, we know what by faith we can stand on top of the world with Jesus. It really helps us to go through the valleys with Jesus.

When we read about John the Baptist being beheaded by King Herod, it is depressing. What a wonderful and faithful servant was John the Baptist, and yet this is the suffering way that his life ended! It is so sad! At those moments, we need to keep in mind the package deal. The death of John the Baptist is connected to the resurrection of John the Baptist.

When the glory appearance is gone, and the visiting Moses and Elijah have left, and the voice of God the Father from heaven has ceased to speak, and the skin and clothing of Jesus no longer was shining with supernatural brightness, when it is just a regular Wednesday and we have to get up and go to work, and face that co-worker who gives us reproach for loving Jesus, it is then that we need to be willing to suffer for Jesus. How? By remembering the glimpse of glory. 1 Corinthians 15:52, *...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet....the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed....Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always*

abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Be willing to suffer while serving Christ, for His glory compels us to listen to Him, to deny ourselves, and to follow Him. You are serving a majestic Christ whose majesty is muted and quiet...for now. You have been given a glimpse of glory.