

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: May 10, 2009

Title: The Mountain of Transfiguration – Jesus unveils His glory

Text: Mark 9:1-13 (Gospel Parallels – Matt. 17:1-13; Luke 9:28-36)

Theme: Jesus assures His disciples that He is all He claims to be. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Everything He is on the Mount was equally true of Him before the Mount and after the Mount. He is the majestic, exalted Christ.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Opening Thought:

There is much around us that we cannot see unless the veil is removed. Snowflakes are like this. It is not until we look through a microscope and see their design that we are taken back. In this text, God unveils who Jesus is and we are to be taken back. He is far greater than anything we could possibly think or imagine. My personal tragedy is that I fail to see who He is and what He has done in the routines of my life. His presence evaporates the invasive nature of the shadow and enables me to see Him in the shadow. This is my personal prayer, and this is my corporate prayer.

Introduction:

Think of the larger context of this study. Jesus is going to die. He is now transfigured before them. He also tells them that Elijah has come. If this is true, then what is the conclusion they must make concerning Jesus?

Verses 1 and 2 connect the content of Mark 8:27ff with Mark 9:2-13. Luke speaks of eight days and not Mark's six. Both are simply noting how the event was about one week later. After the striking blow of our Lord's previously communication, He now assures them that He is the Christ and all that is claimed of Him is true. His inclusion of Peter stands in stark contrast to his rebuke earlier. Jesus lovingly restores those who misspeak. Peter and John briefly allude to the event in their writings (2 Pet. 1:16-18; John 1:14).

¹⁶ "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales 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**, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased' -- ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and **we saw His glory**, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Neither John, Peter nor Mark could forget this moment. It "stained" their thinking and "conquered" their judgment. Everything would hinge on this *apocalypse* (i.e., "lifting of the veil"). Let us not lose sight of how our Lord's previous communication ends with triumph, conquest, and victory. Here He continues to reassure His disciples that He is God. Remember Mark 8:38, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when **He**

comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Here our Lord gives them a glimpse of “the glory of His Father” and He is accompanied by the holy “messengers.”

THE BIG PICTURE:

- Peter’s Confession and Jesus’ Revelation (Mark 8:27-9:1; 9:30-32).
 - The Christ, the Son of the living God must die if His people would live and this is the plan of God for the redemption of man.
- **The Disciples’ Assured - The Transfiguration** (Mark 9:2-13).
 - Jesus assures His disciples that He is all He claims to be. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Note the larger literary context of our present study. **Mark 8:27–10:52** Journey to Jerusalem. Three predictions of Jesus’ death and resurrection are followed by instruction about the cost of discipleship.¹

Its Eternal Value:

Life starts relatively simple, but becomes complex rather quickly. We slowly begin believing that we need something more than what we have in God. We think Jesus must be added to or subtracted from. Yet everything we actually long for is addressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the One to whom we must turn in life and in death. His value lies in His singularity.

The Problem:

“The Mount of Transfiguration is a picture of the partial rapture.”²

Unless the paragraph is read as and in the story, the primary point will be missed. Jesus Christ is the One. When the text says, “All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone” (Mark 9:8), it means that Jesus is not only necessary, but He is enough. The Father speaks to and through the Son. The Holy Spirit speaks to and through the Son. Whatever else we might add to this paragraph, the primary point is “Jesus alone.”

The Storyline:

The events of our Lord’s life and His work unfold according to the story written by God. Everything is happening just as it was promised and pre-figured. I think we see the ministry of our Lord as a great flash of light that quickly dies down and vanishes. It is like starting a fire with gasoline, but having no flammable material to burn. There is an enormous burst of energy and then it disappears. I do not wish to say there was not an enormous explosion when our Lord was present, but He started something that continues to this day. As significant as the incarnation and crucifixion is, it is not the entire story. There is a resurrection, ascension, and then expansion. We are living in the unstoppable work of God. He said He would and He is and He will. How foolish for us to live as if what He did was only an historical fact and not a present reality. What problem do you and I have that He is not able and enough?

Questions:

1. What does 9:1 tell us about the transfiguration? What does it relate to?
2. Why just Peter, James, and John? What might the other disciples think about this "favoritism"?
3. How is His transfiguration described?
4. Why did Elijah and Moses appear with Him?
5. What might they have been talking about? Perhaps the larger context might tell us the content of their communication.
6. Why did Peter suggest the building of three tabernacles?
7. What does verse six tell us about Peter's statement?
8. Why did Peter speak and not the other two?
9. Who or what does the cloud represent?
10. What were the disciples told by the voice from the cloud?
11. What does verse eight tell us about this event?
12. Why does Jesus tell them not to relate to anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man rose from the dead?
13. Verse ten suggests the idea of rising from the dead was foreign to the disciples understanding. Why?
14. Notice the interplay concerning Elijah (vv. 11-13). What is the conclusion we are to make concerning Elijah as the forerunner?
15. What does this tell us about the prophecy?
16. Does the Bible ever speak in a cultural or historical vacuum? Does it speak in a moral or religious vacuum? How does His answer correspond to the Hebrew Scripture?
17. Why do you think Mark dropped this passage in his narrative?
18. How does this passage relate to the overall flow of Mark's story?
19. What part does this paragraph have to the storyline of the Bible?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know Jesus as the Christ confirmed and glorified.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him and His purpose above our own purposes.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the story of God.

There are several prominent features in this event. The event takes generalities and makes them very specific. This paragraph narrows ideas. Everything about this moment speaks to singularity and substantiation. Jesus Christ alone and only is the Son of God. He is unique among everything created. There is nothing else and no one else like Him. There are five ideas celebrating this truth.

- I. From the mass to the few (v. 2a).

Mark 8:34 speaks of "the crowd." This was that swelling mass of humanity that seems to be ever present. Our Lord sought quiet time, but often moments of solitude were

robbed of Him. This text is unique in so far that He takes with Him only Peter, James, and John. Peter, James and John also got to be in on healing Jairus' daughter (5:37) and later on the Mount of Olives (13:3) and the Garden of Gethsemane (14:33).

“The heavenly glory of Christ, which would within a short time be abased upon the cross, is confirmed by visible signs, by the presence and talk of Elias and Moses, and by the voice of the Father himself; all this occurred before three of his disciples, who are witnesses against whom there is no objection.”³

II. From the temporal to the eternal (vv. 2b-3).

The veil is pulled back and we see the reality of what appears to the naked eye. This is not how we live. We live by faith in a sight world. Yet if the veil of the shadow was lifted, we would be stunned by the reality behind it.

“Western culture is increasingly realizing, what most other cultures have never forgotten, that the world we live in has many layers, many dimensions, and that sometimes these dimensions, normally hidden, may appear. Then, like the child with the microscope, we can look for a moment into a different reality, asp with wonder, and ever afterwards see everything differently.”⁴

Jesus lifts the veil of His humanity so that His disciples might witness the glory of God. The glory He had prior to His incarnation still resides within Him. The incarnation added humanity without diminishing deity. Jesus Christ never ceased to be all that He was prior to His enfleshment. This event establishes the truths of Mark 8:27 and contrasts with the horror of the cross. “The heavenly glory of Christ, which would within a short time be abased upon the cross, is confirmed by visible signs.”⁵

“Luke 9:29 says, “His face was altered.” The transfiguration is not an illumination of Jesus from the outside (cf. Ex. 34:29-35) but from the inside. Dazzling white (lit., “**bright as a flash of lightning**”). The transfiguration provides a glimpse of the future glory of the Christ (Luke 9:20), the Son of Man, at his second coming (vv. 26-27) when he comes in the cloud of the glory of God.”⁶

Matthew references the sun in his attempt at capturing the brilliance of this unveiling. No one looks into the sun without being affected and when lighting flashes everyone but the blind take notice. Compare this reading with that of Matthew 28:3.

“And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (Matt. 17:2).

“and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mark 9:3).

“And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming” (Luke 9:29).

“And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow” (Matt. 28:3).

Also consider Daniel 10 and Revelation 1.

⁶ “His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. ⁷ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength” (Dan. 10:6-8).

¹³ “and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1:13-16).

Everything about this moment speaks to the Old Covenant imagery of a pillar of fire by day and a covering cloud at night. It speaks to the Shekinah glory of God that inhabits the earthly tabernacle. There is no other conclusion one can come to other than Jesus Christ is God.

It amazes me that the disciples were not consumed by the expression of His glory. Think of the great privilege that was there to witness the unadulterated glory of God. “He manifested to them the God who was dwelling among them.”⁷

Everything that He was before the addition of humanity (i.e., incarnation), He still is. When Jesus took on the nature of man, He did not forfeit the nature of God. His entombment in flesh simply covered what was always present. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the veil was lifted. When the veil lifted, His glory radiated outward.

Transfigured means to be changed in form. The Greek word is the term “metamorphosis”, and is used of Christians spiritually in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.

III. From the shadow to the substance (v. 4).

Our studies from Mark appear repetitive, and indeed they are. This is the story Mark tells and we are to read, understand, and enjoy. Everything points to Christ and everything will flow from Him. For me to say less than this would be a violation of the text before us. Moses and Elijah are but shadows, shadows to be sure, but shadows nonetheless.

Those figures by which He was identified (i.e., Elijah, Moses, one of the prophets [See Mark 8:28]) are His attendants. They are neither His equal nor superior.

“Moses and Elijah have been interpreted to represent the Law and the Prophets, respectively, recognizing and adoring Jesus. The Transfiguration of Christ is the culminating point of his epic life, just as his Baptism is its starting point, and his Ascension is its end. Moreover, this glorious event has been related in detail by the appearance of Moses, to hand over as it were, the Law and the Dispensation to Jesus. This throws a light on the reason for the Transfiguration which is lost in the accepted versions of the Gospels. Elias also appears, so as to make with Moses, the "two witnesses" required by the Law. They recognize Jesus as the Christ, and witness to him as the great Prophet whom God should raise to succeed and take the place of Moses as the Legislator of the New Dispensation.”⁸

Both Moses and Elijah saw in Jesus the consummation of all they spoke of. All history was finding its fulfillment in who He is and what He would do.

Luke 9:31 says they talked of Jesus’ “exodus,” that is, His death. It is from this unveiling that the nature of the offering is manifested. The sacrifice offered is none other than the beloved Son of God.

IV. From the fear-filled to the Father (vv. 5-8).

Verse 6 tells us that Peter was terrified. Peter spoke without thinking and acted without perspective. The Jews celebrated the “Feast of tabernacles” every fall (perhaps it was that time of year) to remember the exodus from Egypt. Apparently Peter heard the discussion about the Exodus and assumed Tabernacle. The movement within the text moves us from Peter’s terror and fear to the Father’s tenderness and favor. The Father’s confirmation validates the Son’s person and work. This event reminds us of Jesus’ baptism. We have the cloud, references to John the Baptist/Elijah, and the voice from heaven. This marks the mid-point of the gospel of Mark.

“God said to them "This is my Son -- do what He says." God emphasized what Christ had been trying to teach them, and that they probably didn't want to believe -- that He was going to die. It had to happen, they couldn't prevent it from happening.”⁹

His disciples struggled greatly with the new information spoken earlier. God the Father now confirms and encourages them to believe all He said. The Jewish nation listened to Moses and heard Elijah; now they must know the voice of the Christ.

Augustine notes how, “Moses was there, and Elijah. The voice did not say: These are my beloved sons. For One only is the Son; others are adopted. It is he that is commended to them: He from whom the law and prophets derive their glory.”¹⁰

In the statement we can see how Jesus is the object of His affection, "My Son, whom I love." He is the prophet through whom He speaks, "Listen to Him." "Listen to him" echoes Deut. 18:15, 18, where Moses is shown to be a leader-prophet. Anyone who does not listen to the Messiah of God rejects God, who sent him."¹¹ Consider the weight of this revelation in the context of what Jesus has now begun to share and continues to share. What Jesus speaks concerning Himself is the truth. It is not contrary to the previous prophecies or pictures, but the complete fulfillment of all that was foretold and pre-figured. Despite the perplexity of the communication for His disciples, they must believe what He says.

V. From confusion to clarity (vv. 9-13).

The disciples are to keep silent because they don't understand (9-10). This is the last of these commands to keep silent in Mark, explaining the others. Jesus couldn't be fully understood or proclaimed as messiah apart from his death and resurrection.

"They still did not understand, and their failure to understand was due to the cause which always makes men fail to understand – they clung to their way and refused to see God's way. They wished things as they desired them and not as God had ordered them. the error of their thoughts had blinded them to the revelation of God's truth."¹²

The Storyline of the Bible declares Him to be God. Prophecies of the One's arrival are fulfilled in John and Jesus. The idea that His disciples did not "get it" is prevalent (Mark 6:52; 8:17, 21; 9:32). They consistently fumbled over the idea of death, burial, and resurrection. "As Jews they were familiar with the doctrine of the resurrection; it was the resurrection of the Son of Man that baffled them, because their theology had no place for a suffering and dying Messiah."¹³ Yet, God pursues His people with equal persistency. God would have us live in the one story. Our confusion comes when we try to understand our story apart from His. There is no clarity only confusion when we think we are writing the script.

This entire event is to confirm the theology flowing from Mark 8:27 and following. What Jesus communicated and what the Father confirms are set forth in Isaiah 53. This moment continues to establish the one story of God as written from Genesis through Revelation. Who has eyes to see, who among us has ears to hear? God has spoken. Oh may we but believe. Jesus Christ is all He claims to be in His person and work. Dear God, "We do believe; help us overcome our unbelief!"

Many of us would love to see the resurrected and glorified Christ. In thinking this, we believe what we lack is the cause of our lethargy. Yet Peter recognizes the written Word as taking precedence over the experience in 2 Peter 1.

¹⁶ "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For 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" (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

¹⁹ "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit would peel back the shadow and cause us to see the substance.

Shepherding the Sheep (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. We cannot stay on the mountaintops of life. Life is not lived there. Life is lived in the valley among the inhabitants. God did not stay in "heaven." He came to earth and lived among those He came to redeem.
2. Do you know that God has picked you? You are special because God has placed on you His favor.
3. Are you still living in the temporal flesh of your existence or are you living in the glory of certainty?
4. Are you still living in the shadow or are you looking at the substance?
5. Is your fear crippling you from acting or are you listening to the Father?
6. God does not desire for you to be confused. He wants you to understand the story and to live life with clarity.
7. Everything He is on the Mount was equally true of Him before the Mount and after the Mount. He is the majestic, exalted Christ.
8. His name is Jesus and He is to be loved, worshipped, and served.

¹ <http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Mark+9>

² <http://www.truthablaze.com/transfigured.html>

³ 1599 *Geneva Bible Notes* on Mark 9:2.

⁴ N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 115.

⁵ 1599 *Geneva Bible Notes* on Mark 9:2

⁶ <http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Mark+9>

⁷ Chrysostom, "Eutropius, and the Vanity of Riches, Homily 2," in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Mark*, 110).

⁸ http://www.thenazareneway.com/transfiguration_on_the_mount.htm

⁹ <http://pewview.mu.nu/archives/174640.html>

¹⁰ Augustine, "Sermons on New Testament Lessons," in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Mark*, 110.

¹¹ <http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Mark+9>

¹² William Barclay, *Mark*, 214.

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible* on Mark 9:10.