

Message Series: Preparing for the Savior.  
Message 15: The Transfiguration of the Savior. Mark 9:1-13  
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Have you ever had the opportunity to witness a truly great event but missed it? I do not believe that has happened to me, although it might be because I missed it! But that is exactly what almost happened to three of the Disciples of Christ. We find the incident recorded in Mark chapter nine...

What we find in this passage is a mountaintop experience unlike any other in history. It describes a moment when Jesus unveiled His glory. There are four parts to this incident that are meant to have an impact even in our lives today.

Look at verses 2-3...

## **I. The Transfiguration of Jesus**

These verses describe the transfiguration of Jesus. When we last considered the life of Christ. We saw the Apostle Peter at his very best and his very worst. One moment he was confessing Jesus as the Christ, and in the next he was rebuking Jesus and finding himself associated with Satan. The incident here in Mark nine takes place one week later.

Jesus took three of His disciples (Peter, James, and John) up on a high mountain, according to Luke 9:28 they went there to pray. That in itself was a special privilege and these three enjoyed that privilege quite frequently.

We have no idea what Jesus prayed about because on this occasion Peter, James, and John all fell asleep. That seems amazing to me, having been given such a great privilege and not to take advantage of it. But then we do the same thing don't we. In Hebrews 4:16 we are invited to boldly approach the throne of grace often, but more often than not we fail to take advantage of the opportunity. As a result, the same thing happens to us that almost happened to those men; we miss His glory.

A week earlier, when Peter said to Jesus, "*You are the Christ,*" Jesus made a promise, it is found in Mark 9:1...

The disciples had been looking for the Messiah in all of His glory, and now Jesus promised that some of them would see it. One week went by and probably most of them had already forgotten His promise. But on that mountaintop, while Jesus was praying, He was transfigured before them. Basically, the word *transfigured* means *changed*. It is the same Greek word we use to describe the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly, *metamorphoo*.

The appearance of Jesus' face was altered, and even His clothes shined brighter than anything on earth.

What happened reminds me a lot of Moses in the book of Exodus (34:29f) when he came down from the mountain having spent time in the presence of God. The appearance of his face was also altered so that it was too bright to look on. For the sake of the people he put a veil over his face until the glow went away. But what happened to Moses is not a parallel to what happened to Jesus. Moses' face glowed from the outside as a result of being in the presence of God. But what happened to Jesus is as different as the light of the sun and the light of the moon. The moon only reflects light, the sun generates its own light. The brightness of Christ was the outward expression of His own character. The glow which Jesus took on was not the result of something happening outside of Him, it came from within Him.

For one brief moment He pulled open the veil and allowed His deity to show that those men might behold His glory.

What happened defies our imagination because you and I have nothing to compare it with. It was an experience like none of us have had. And Peter, James, and John almost missed it because they were asleep.

I wonder how many of God's promises you and I miss out on because we are not alert and diligent in prayer. Probably more than we realize. James said it in a very blunt way in James 4:1, "*You do not have because you do not ask.*"

There's no better example in Scripture that helps us to understand the necessity of changing the way we think about prayer than what happened on top that mountain. Too often prayer is something we don't like to do, it seems dull and makes us drowsy, but it is the channel through which God's blessings flow. If we want to experience God's blessings, if we want to see His glory, then we must remain alert in prayer.

## II. The Conversation with Moses and Elijah

Now while these men were sleeping they almost missed something else: the conversation which Jesus had with Moses and Elijah. Look at verse 4...

Here in Mark's Gospel we get the impression that Peter, James, and John woke up when Moses and Elijah appeared, but Luke 9:32-33 provides a little more information and there we learn they did not wake up until Moses and Elijah were about to leave. And that's too bad because even though they did see Jesus in His glory, saw Moses and Elijah, and heard the tail-end of their conversation, they missed most of it. What were they talking about? Mark doesn't tell us but Luke does. In Luke 9:31 he says they, "*spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*" They were talking about the soon coming death of Jesus upon the cross.

Now just imagine for a moment the impact that conversation could have had on Peter, James, and John, but especially Peter. One week earlier when Jesus said to His disciples that He would be rejected, killed, and rise from the grave the third day, Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him. He wasn't looking for a suffering Messiah, he was looking for a conquering Messiah. But now he had the opportunity to see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears the representatives of the Old Testament Law and Prophets confirming the death of Christ, but he and the others completely missed it because they were sleeping and did not have enough sober-minded alertness to listen and learn.

To say the least, when Peter saw Moses and Elijah he was awestruck but he wasn't speechless. To him the situation demanded a response. Look at verses 5-6...

Peter was saying, "*Jesus, this is a great place to be, let us make three shelters so we can camp out here for awhile!*"

Peter made the same mistake we often make. Because we are often drowsy to spiritual things, rather than alert, we often do not get the point, we merely respond to the experience, whatever it might be, good or bad, and we speak without real spiritual understanding.

Peter did not understand, he did not know what the heart of their conversation had been, but he spoke anyway enabling us to see his

ignorance. Not only did he miss the point of their conversation, but he also missed the point of the Transfiguration. As far as he was concerned Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were equals: Moses the representative of the Law, Elijah of the Prophets, and Jesus of the Kingdom. But the whole point was that Jesus had no equal, He was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, God with us!

I'm afraid that we are far too much like Peter; we sleep spiritually when we should be awake and we talk when we should be quiet. And so we get distracted by the wrong things, we go off on tangents, and we miss the whole point of what the Lord is trying to get into us. I wish we all could do a better job of staying awake and listening to what Jesus really has to say to us. What a difference it would make in our lives, our families, our churches, and our world.

### **III. The Confirmation of the Father**

While Peter was still speaking something else happened, which he did not miss: the confirmation of Jesus by God the Father. See verses 7-8...

The Cloud that overshadowed them was the same that was with Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 40:36-38), it was the same that filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35), and it was the same that filled the Temple at the start of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 8:10-11). It was the *Shekinah Glory*, none other than the presence of God; from this Cloud God spoke audibly and directly to Peter, James, and John; just as I am speaking to you now.

In one short sentence He made two very important statements, which are just as important for us today as they were for them: (1) *This is My beloved Son*, (2) *hear Him!* The force was like this, "*Peter, My beloved Son, God the Son in His glory stands before you, get quiet and hear Him, be still and know that He is God!*" (Psalm 46:10)

There probably isn't any better advice that could be given today than that! When our lives get distracted we need to hear Him. When we're awestruck by our own experiences we need to hear Him. When we open our eyes to start the day we need to hear Him. When we assemble ourselves together as His church we need to hear Him. We just need to hear Him!

As you can imagine, according to Matthew 17:6, Peter, James, and John fell with their faces to the ground and were greatly afraid. That's the position they should have assumed throughout this entire incident! You and I can probably stand a little more humility, worship, and godly fear in our lives as well.

According to Matthew 17:7 Jesus then went to them, touched them, and said, "*Arise, and be not afraid.*" And when they looked up they saw no one but Jesus ONLY.

I don't want to be guilty of making more of that than is intended but those words strike me as that which should be the goal of each one of us: to see Jesus ONLY! How much better than the blurred, confused, and distracted focus of much of Christianity today. We need to rub our eyes, wake up, and see Jesus!

#### **IV. The Transition from the Mountain**

Once their eyes were focused as they should have been all along, it was time to go down from the mountain, but as we find in verses 9-13, the trip down included an important transition. Look at those verses...

We are no different than Peter, James, and John. Their desire would have been exactly the same as ours had we been on top of that mountain. No doubt they were bubbling with excitement and couldn't wait to tell the others what they had seen, but Jesus commanded them to tell no one until after His resurrection. Why?

One basic reason: they did not yet understand what they had really seen and heard. Remember, they slept through most of it! Their misunderstanding is indicated by two things. First, according to verse ten, they had no idea what was meant by His rising from the dead. Second, their question about Elijah in verse eleven indicated they were still thinking conquering Messiah and the entrance of the Kingdom. Had they gone down the mountain and told the people what they had just witnessed there would have been a new rush to make Jesus King, and the crowds were already wanting to do that (See John 6:15). They needed some time and the resurrection itself to help them place His Transfiguration in its proper context. Right then what they needed to know was that Jesus was going to suffer, die, and rise again, and so in verse twelve Jesus directed them again to His sufferings.

When we have our minds set on something it is very difficult for us to change them, so the Lord has to confront us again, and again, and again with the truth about Him until we get it. We cannot have the Kingdom without His death and resurrection. We cannot have Jesus as King until we first have Him as Savior.

The Transfiguration, confirmed by the voice of the Father, was about the Son of God fulfilling the Law and the Prophets by suffering and dying for our sins, and then rising again, victorious over sin and death, that we might have Him as both Savior and Lord, the One we look to by faith, the One we listen to, and the One we obey.

Can you say this morning, first of all, that you know Jesus as Savior, the One who suffered, died, and rose again for you? Forget about everything else regarding religion, what you have heard and what you have wondered about until you take care of that first. Admit to Him that you are a sinner, believe that He died for your sin and rose again, and ask Him to be your Savior.

Then look to Him, listen to Him, and obey Him as the Lord of your life.