

Sermon on **Mark 9:2-9 - Transfiguration Sunday 2.14.21**

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There are times in life where it feels like everything is right and going as it should, and you realize it. But then something happens, whether good or bad, and everything is turned upside down. A new job offer, a new baby, a new relationship, a move to a different state, the loss of a job, the loss of a loved one, or some difficult time in your life. Everything is different and you are not sure what to make of it. But God does. He knows what he's doing, what he's allowed, what he has sent into your life. He will give to you what is needed. This is for you. He will turn you back to himself or more strongly to himself who is our everything – Jesus Christ. As we go up the mountain with Jesus and his disciples, **Get a Good Look and Listen. This is for you.**

The disciples had it all figured out, or so they thought. They were just starting to grasp who Jesus is and what he was doing. They were confident just like when a little child tells you, the adult, that they'll hold on to your hand as you approach some ice or they walk on a curb or wall. And they grasp your pinky finger gingerly with a light grip. Their world was going to be turned upside down. But that was ok because Jesus was doing it. They had confessed to Jesus, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* They were getting it.

Then Jesus told them he would suffer at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law, be killed and after three days rise again. Peter let go of Jesus' hand and told him, *"Never, Lord!" "This shall never happen to you!"* Peter must have wanted an earthly kingdom, Jerusalem restored to its former glory, and a bunch of thrones for the disciples. James and John's mom asks Jesus for as much. But Jesus shattered Peter's rose-colored glasses when Jesus rebuked him, *"Get behind me, Satan!"* Then Jesus shocked his disciples and you and me, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."* Jesus let them chew on that for about a week. They had just felt like everything was right and as it should be, and Jesus turned their world upside down. Jesus knew what he was doing.

"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." Jesus had singled out these three fishermen before to come along with him alone. They had seen him raise Jairus's daughter from the dead. They would be with Jesus as he sweat drops of blood in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here they served as the suitable two or three witnesses Scripture called for to verify an event. But more than just verification, **this was for them to get a good look and listen and believe.**

As Jesus was praying to his Father in heaven as he so often did, Jesus' glory shone through. Jesus' appearance changed. They saw clearly that the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, Mary's son, is also fully the true Son of God from eternity with all glory and power and wisdom and strength. His clothes were an unearthly dazzling bright white – holy and powerful. When Peter confessed *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"* he knew it was true, but here Peter, James and John see it with their own eyes!

"And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus." Patriarchs, Prophets of the past appear, are immediately recognized and known by the disciples – no nametags necessary. Peter, James and John see them with their own eyes. They hear them talking with Jesus about his Exodus at Jerusalem. *Moses*, the human being God used to exodus his people out of Egypt and to write the book of the Bible we call *"Exodus,"* now spoke with Jesus about his Exodus. *Elijah* spoke, the great zealous prophet, called to preach to Israel when it was so lost in idolatry that there were only 7,000 who had not bowed their knee to Baal, a climate similar, so it seemed, to what Jesus was working in and walking into as he approached Jerusalem. Peter, James and John were amazed and frightened at the same time.

"Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)" As if sainted believers, residents already of heaven, would have need for earthly shelters, Peter was babbling in his excitement and fear. What would you have said? I would have said nothing or said something even more senseless. But the sentiment was clear – Peter wanted the glory to continue.

"Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" God the Father spoke from the cloud of his glory. They had only heard about this cloud

from the pages of Scripture, leading the children of Israel by night and day, filling the tabernacle, illuminating Moses' face, filling the temple Solomon had built and they dedicated, and now they see it with their own eyes. They were terrified. God's voice thundered at Jesus' baptism just years before as Jesus took up his public ministry. Now God speaks his approval over all Jesus is, all he had done and would do. Jesus is the Prophet Moses prophesied would come. Moses and the Father say *"Listen to him!"* Their heads down, lying prostrate on the ground, the three could not handle this. **They got a good look. They listened.**

Jesus went to them, told them to get up and not be afraid. *"Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead."* Just Jesus. Glory veiled. No more patriarchs. No more voice from the cloud. Just Jesus. Maybe it was a letdown as they walked down the mountain and heard Jesus' strict order not to say anything about this until he had risen from the dead. There would be a couple more glimmers as Jesus would do some more miracles, as Jesus would triumphantly ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, but the troubles were rolling their way as they descended the mountainside on the way to calvary.

Just Jesus. Is he enough for you? When your life gets flipped upside down, is he enough? When stress is high, life is difficult, temptation is knocking at the door of your weak and doubting heart, is he enough? Do you wish life was different? Why do we always have to go down the mountainside where everything is a mess. Why aren't things better for us? Why do I have to face this difficulty, this temptation, this trial, this melancholy, this regret, this impossible situation I find myself in?

We hear, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."* God allows. God sends. God knows what he is doing. Sinner saints like you and me get this thought in our heads that Christianity ought to be easier, or that life would be easier without Jesus, or if we keep him at arm's length. We do one of two things, we either try to make life easier by ignoring God's commands in our lives and tolerating sin, thinking sin is ok or God will turn a blind eye -which he doesn't, Or our difficulties, worries, hardships simmer over like a seemingly unattended pot on the stove foaming over and making a mess of our hearts and our lives and we cry out. In our sinful arrogance and weakness we despair and wonder if God knows or cares.

God wasn't done with his disciples yet, nor is he done with you. **Get a good look and listen.** They would have to be broken. Their little gingerly grip on Jesus' pinky would not sustain them, neither will ours. Only Jesus holding them firmly in his grip works. Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing what lay ahead of him. He suffered at the hands of the evil men who ministered in the temple and taught the people, men who should have rejoiced at Jesus' coming, but rejected him. Jesus suffered separation from the one who spoke his approval and bond on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus cried out on the cross, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me."*

Get a good look and listen. This is for you. Just Jesus was on the cross suffering hell for the sins of mankind your sins and mine – not you, not me, just Jesus. Just Jesus was laid in a tomb, dead for three days. Just Jesus came out of that tomb alive and glorious. Why did he do it? He did it so it wouldn't be just Jesus in heaven, but you and me and all those who believe in him, all those whom the Spirit has enlightened with his gifts - the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Because of Jesus and his work alone, we are saved. We are forgiven. We can have full confidence in what our God has done, is doing and will do for us, in us, through us and to us.

As we follow Jesus to the cross of Calvary in the coming weeks of Lent, carry your cross of self-denial. God in his mercy and wisdom works true repentance in us – realizing and sorrowing over our sinfulness, uncovering the lies we tell ourselves and the sins we entertain. He breaks their hold and helps you turn away from them and look to Jesus only, his cross for you, his life for you, his resurrection assuring your forgiveness and eternal life. In his love and mercy he grips us firmly in his nail-marked hands – this is all for you. And we start to understand. In his Word and in our lives, God turns our worlds upside-down so that we **Get a good look and listen and believe. He does it all for us.** Amen.