

Mark 9:2-9
“A Glimpse of What is to Come”
The Transfiguration of Our Lord

February 14, 2021
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
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Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Happy Valentine’s Day to my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

“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” (Mark 9:2).

In just mere minutes, Peter, James, and John saw a glimpse of what is to come. So, what did they see? What did they hear? What did this experience mean for Jesus, for the disciples, and for us?

First, let’s go back six days before this mountaintop experience. Six days earlier, Jesus was with His disciples as they were on their way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, Jesus asked His disciples, **“Who do people say that I am?”** (Mark 8:27b) The disciples then responded with what they heard from the crowds about Jesus, saying: **“John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets”** (Mark 8:28).

Jesus then asks them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** (Mark 8:29a) Peter immediately answered, **“You are the Christ”** (Mark 8:29b).

But that day did not end with Peter’s confession. That day continued, as Jesus talks about His going to Jerusalem. He talks about His upcoming suffering and death. He says that after three days, He would rise again. Jesus spoke this plainly. Each disciple understood what Jesus had said to them. But Peter, who just confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the very Messiah, could not fathom His Lord dying. Peter spoke up rebuking Jesus saying things like, “Never, I will never let you die!”

Then Jesus rebuked Peter for setting his mind on the things of man, rather than the things of God. Then Jesus speaks that if anyone would follow Him, they must deny themselves, they must take up a cross and always be ready to lose their life. Here, Jesus is preparing His disciples for what is to come.

[The Mount of Transfiguration]

Fast forward to today's lesson, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain by themselves. Now, many crucial things in God's saving plan have taken place on mountains. This mountaintop experience would be no different.

Suddenly, Jesus' appearance transformed before their eyes. Jesus became dazzling bright and radiant. His face was radiating like the sun. His clothing became intensely white as white as pure light as no one on earth could bleach them. Now, there was no spotlight beaming onto Him; this was pure light coming from Him. Jesus was the source of this light. Jesus' human appearance was being overpowered by His divine glory.

As Peter, James, and John were astounded by the light radiating from Jesus, there appeared in front of them Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus. Now, Elijah and Moses were also known for their own mountaintop experiences. God spoke to Elijah upon Mount Horeb. God also gave Moses the Ten Commandments upon Mount Sinai. But this mountaintop experience was like no other.

As there was confusion on who Jesus was six days earlier. Upon this mountain, there was no confusion. At this moment, Moses and Elijah – *who represent the Law and the Prophets* – are bearing witness that Jesus is the Savior of the world, who has come to suffer, die, and rise to restore humanity to God the Father.

As the disciples are overhearing this conversation between Jesus, Elijah and Moses, not knowing what to say, Peter blurts out, ***“Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents”*** (Mark 9:5a).

Sometimes, we are like Peter. We, too, often do not know what to say when it comes to suffering and death. And, frankly, if we had it our way, we would like to skip suffering and death, altogether.

But suffering and death is the way of Jesus. He would come down from that mountain and once again hide His glorious appearance. He would walk through the valley of the shadow of death for all people. He would be falsely tried and unjustly convicted. He would carry His own cross to Golgotha. He would feel the heavy nails piercing His wrists and ankles. He would experience the lifting of the cross into its place in the stone. He would die.

Knowing all that was ahead of Him, Jesus gives a glimpse of His glory. Jesus revealed His glory for His disciples and for us. But why did Jesus do this? This morning, we'll look at some of those reasons Jesus manifested His divine glory.

[Christ is Our Hope]

First, Jesus knew His time on earth was coming to a close and He knew His departure would cause fear and doubt in the minds of His disciples. Although, Christ's disciples have seen many miracles and signs, they still lacked faith from time to time, just as we do.

We, like the disciples, tend to worry about what is next. We can get ourselves caught up in being world-weary. After watching any news cast, many of us ask, "Where do we go from here?"

Like us, the disciples were world-weary. Like us, they needed hope. This is why Jesus displayed His real glory on the mountaintop. You see, Jesus knew that His upcoming suffering and death may cause His disciples to lose heart. This is why He displayed His divine glory to give them hope and to remind them that He is in fact still in control. Despite being nailed to the cross, Jesus is still in control. All we have to do is to trust.

So, even in what seems like the worst of times, God is there to turn that bad into good. Through His Transfiguration, He is teaching His disciples that it is only through His suffering and death that He will show us true glory – His resurrection glory!

[Christ Gives Us a Glimpse of Heaven]

Second, Jesus gave His disciples and us a glimpse of heaven. You see, a little glimpse of heaven was displayed upon that mountaintop.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus never introduced Moses and Elijah to Peter, James, and John. And there were not any quality pictures of Moses and Elijah. Yet, these three disciples instinctively knew they were in the presence of Moses and Elijah. How would they recognize Moses and Elijah?

Many of us may wonder if we would, in fact, recognize our loved ones in heaven.

This moment at the Transfiguration proves that we will recognize our loved ones in heaven. This includes even those we have never seen with our own eyes. For anyone who has experienced the death of a child, or you never met a grandparent, you will recognize everyone you see in heaven. This is how Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah as this glimpse of heaven on earth was revealed to them. You see, when we are in heaven, we will recognize everyone, those we knew in our earthly life and those we never met.

[Christ Leads us to Follow Him]

Third, Jesus gives us a glimpse of our transformation in Christ. You see, by grace through faith in Jesus, we are transformed, even in this life in a fallen world. As Paul says in our epistle lesson, ***“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”... So, “we renounce disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s Word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God”*** (2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:2).

As God the Father proclaimed from the cloud upon the mountaintop, ***“This is my beloved Son; listen to Him”*** (Mark 9:7), we listen to our Savior Jesus as we hear His words of life, forgiveness, and salvation. In this, we are transformed. Due to Jesus and His life-giving cross, we have a striking alteration of our character. Instead of becoming a lover of self, we become a lover of God in Christ. And, we become a lover of our neighbor, too.

So, whatever our vocations in life – male or female; mother, father, or child; in the workplace; or in the Church – we receive a new life in Christ. In this new life, we repent of our sins daily and remember that our identity is that of a child of the heavenly Father, which God proclaimed at your baptism.

[Glimpse of Our Resurrected Bodies]

Today, on this Transfiguration of Our Lord Sunday, Christ prepares us for what is to come. He alone gives us the sure and certain hope in all circumstances.

As we soon will begin the season of Lent, Jesus will leave the mount of Transfiguration and turn His face to Mount Calvary. Even through the darkness of Mount Calvary, His light shines through that darkness and bursts forth on Easter.

Even today, we continue to receive a glimpse of Christ's glory as He continues to transform us through His Word and Sacrament. Through His Word, we hear His life-giving voice as He leads us in His Law and Gospel. Through His Sacrament, Jesus comes to us transformed in the form of bread and wine to forgive our sins and strengthen our faith.

Lastly, Christ reveals to us a glimpse of our own resurrected bodies. You see, when Christ returns in all glory, everyone in Christ will be transformed to the fullness of our inheritance as He will transform our mortal bodies into a body like His. We will be transformed into immortal bodies. This will all happen ***“in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed”*** (1 Corinthians 15:52).

In this blessed moment upon the mount of Transfiguration, we receive a glimpse of the blessings to come that are ours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠