

Mark 9:2-9

February 19, 2012 – TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

It Is Good To Be Here!

✠ Seeing Jesus' glory (vv.2-6)

✠ Listening to God's Son (vv.7-9)

In the name of Jesus, our beautiful Savior, dear fellow disciples of our Lord:

For several weeks of this Epiphany season we've been watching our Lord Jesus shine in glory as God. He's been healing the sick and raising the dead for all to know without a doubt that Jesus is God, the Savior of the world. But you know how it is when people are living in the midst of history. Events flash by like towns along the railroad tracks while weary train passengers watch through the windows. Soon the lights all blur together until drooping eyelids and lumbering slumber overtake all. But when the train slams on its brakes, everyone is wide awake to see what happened and if anyone is hurt. Jesus' own disciples seemed to miss those events flying by, at least until Jesus spoke of the train wreck of His life. Wisely He had waited until the end of His ministry to mention that He would die on a cross.

After Peter made his good confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:27-30), Jesus began teaching about His cruel suffering and death. The impetuous disciple leader turned against God's Son and His salvation plan. Remember the Lord's rebuke of Peter? (8:33) Jesus warned that we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him. Then our loving Lord gave a miraculous sign: *"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."* (9:1 NIV84) When they finally saw it six days later, we can see why Peter said: **It Is Good To Be Here!**

✠ Seeing Jesus' glory (vv.2-6)

Have you noticed how in the Bible God did great things on mountains? On Mount Moriah the LORD commanded Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. (Genesis 22:2) And on that same Mount Moriah Solomon built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 3:1) You'll easily remember Mount Sinai where the LORD gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The Old Covenant showed them their sin and their Savior in the sacrifices. Mount Zion is another name for Mount Moriah, where sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple foreshadowed the coming Christ. There are even figurative mountains in a favorite Psalm of Ascents which some of you have heard on my hospital visits: *"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."* (121:1 NIV84) Normally mountains would be a fine place for everyone to see.

But not this time. Not everyone would be **Seeing Jesus' glory**. He was hiding His glory under His humiliation as a human being to be our Savior. Vulnerable to Herod's sword as a Baby, subject to His parents growing up, Jesus hid His glory in weakness so that most people missed the shining brilliance of His divinity like towns flashing by a train in the night. *"Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone."* *"All alone"* with Jesus! How often haven't you wished you could just sit quietly with Him and ask for advice or enjoy the comfort of His warm friendship? It must have been an awesome experience because Peter could hardly hold it in.

Imagine **Seeing Jesus' glory** suddenly shine in full brilliance in dazzling white clothes. Then two prophets of old are standing there too, Moses through whom God gave his Law on Mount Sinai, and Elijah who upheld God's Law on Mount Carmel in troubled times. In fear and excitement Peter blurted out: *"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.)

It's easy to sympathize with Peter. What he really wanted was to make his heaven on earth in a grand camping trip with God. Who hasn't wished you could stay on an awesome vacation or deeply in love with the soul-mate of your dreams? God gives wonderful gifts of time, relaxation, relationships out

of the goodness of His grace for our enjoyment. (Acts 14:17) But how can God allow them to take His place in our hearts? Wouldn't we lose everything then? It would be like staying in the last big town as your train comes out of the mountains, but you don't realize the town will be buried under volcanic ash by morning. God's love for our eternal souls and His burning desire to bring us safely home to heaven compels Him to take away some of our dearest treasures. The bottom line for God is getting us home to bliss eternal with Him. Our bottom line falls far short. We're happy for a first down, but God will not rest until we win the game with Christ our Champion. No other goal is good enough for God.

✠ **Listening to God's Son (vv.7-9)**

That's why the Father stepped in to help Peter and the others. As at Jesus' Baptism the Father spoke from heaven, "***This is my Son, whom I love.***" Only this time He added, "***Listen to him!***" Unless we keep **Listening to God's Son**, we will lose everything Jesus lived and died to give us. Peter wanted heaven on earth, but it disappeared with the glory cloud. "***Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.***" And He would give them orders coming down the mountain "***not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.***" Jesus would only reveal His glory in the shame of the cross. Even His resurrection was for witnesses only.

How well are we **Listening to God's Son**? Another way to ask that is how do you deal with disappointment? Have you matured in your faith enough to see God's love through your tears? Can you trust that all things really do work for good to those who love God and have been called according to His purpose? (Romans 8:28) Do you trust His purpose to bring you safely home to heaven with Him?

One of history's best selling books is *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, published February 18, 1678. Bunyan tells the story of a man named Christian who goes through many trials and tribulations. One day he found his path was far too difficult, so he crossed over a fence into a beautiful meadow where walking was easy. But the farther he went, the more the ground grew soggy and covered with poisonous vines. The sky grew dark, and poor Christian had to spend the night huddled at the base of an oak tree. By morning he was soaked from the rain. Then a giant named Despair attacked and captured him, beat him and threw him into the dungeon of Doubting Castle with its thick, dark walls. Christian tried to sing, but his voice only croaked. Giant Despair kept beating him weaker and weaker every day. Finally Christian found a rope in his cell along with a knife and a bottle. He could use them to end his own suffering in suicide. But instead Christian prayed. And finally one night he remembered something. "What a fool I am!" he said. "I lie here in this stinking dungeon when I could easily just walk away. I have the key called Promise right here in my heart. I can unlock the doors of Doubting Castle and walk away free on God's promises. Giant Despair can never touch me there praising God.

Down from the Mount of Transfiguration on the plain where reality bites, we need to keep **Listening to God's Son** more and more. We listen carefully every year in midweek Lenten services.

One woman who kept listening all her life was born in a New York cottage in 1820. Friends and family called her Fanny. Only six weeks old, she caught a cold in her eyes which a visiting doctor treated with mustard poultices. It left her nearly blind for life. But Fanny grew up determined to do her best. Only eight years old, she wrote a poem: *O what a happy soul I am! / Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world contented I will be.* She studied, then taught at New York's Institution for the Blind. Fanny Crosby flourished as a writer and even recited her poems before Congress, making friends with American presidents. But she was 31 when she met her best Friend, Jesus at John Street Methodist Church in New York. Singing one of my favorite hymns, "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?" she came to the line, "Here, Lord, I give myself away," and said she felt her soul flooded light. Fanny was 44 when a friend suggested she should write hymns. So she did – for 50 years. 8,000 hymns! ¹ Think of blind Fanny Crosby when we sing our last hymn today, one of hers. When you keep **Listening to God's Son**, you can't help singing, "To God be the glory; great things he has done." (CW 399) Amen.

¹ Both stories from *On This Day* by Robert J. Morgan. Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997. www.laridian.com
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