

Mountain Top: Transfiguration

Not sure if you've ever been to the mountains? Maybe it was a vacation. Maybe it was a retreat. I love the ocean -- reminds me of how big God is and the rhythms of his grace always rolling in.

But there is something about the mountains that creates for me a taste of his handiwork and majesty.

I think of the verse where it says all creation sings – attests to His splendor –

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
 let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. ~Psalm 96

Mountains have played a significant role in our faith for centuries and today we see again Jesus and 3 of his disciples on a mountain top experience.

Today here in this text today, Jesus reveals not a truth or nugget of wisdom – but more of himself to his early followers – his true nature as the Son of God – and it's powerful

When we see God more clearly for who He is and let His love and grace genuinely impact us – it changes how we view life and engage with it. It inspires us to worship HIM more fully

Not sure if you've ever had those moments where God speaks (maybe not audibly, but reveals to you) - engaging you in a way that was clearly Him....

- *Moments where Scripture is as if it's alive and active speaking right into your life (Hebrews 4:12)*
- *Moments where prayers are answered in such a way that it's inescapably His intervention/interaction*
- *Moments where someone shares something with you and it's as if God whispered thru him or her, right to you! – it's life giving and it's in line with Scripture*
- *Circumstances are so perfectly orchestrated you sense God's hand of specific guidance and care around you...*

Those moments are precious – I pray that you have them...life-giving to know the God of the Universe is revealing himself to you in specific ways...

Today we're going to lean back into such an experience. It's a mountain top experience that fueled Jesus' ministry in the valley. 3 disciples were witnesses. Peter, James, John. There is some rich theological significance to this passage

The account of the transfiguration is spectacular. It's a very famous passage in the Bible, of course. It's absolutely spectacular, but what does it actually mean? What are we supposed to learn from it? Are we just to be impressed about it? Or is there a bit more...

READ MARK 9:1-7

Jesus took the disciples *up a high mountain*—either Mount Hermon or Mount Tabor. Mount Hermon is about twelve miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi (where Jesus had been in 8:27); Mount Tabor is in Galilee. A mountain was often associated with closeness to God and readiness to receive his words.

God had appeared to both Moses (Exodus 24:12–18) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8–18) on mountains

The Greek word translated “transfigured” is *metamorphothe*, from **which we get our word “metamorphosis.”**

The verb refers to an outward change that comes from within.

It was not a change merely in appearance, but it was a complete change into another form. This wasn't Jesus putting on a costume or revealing some SuperMan pajamas type thing under his robe.

On earth Jesus appeared as a man, a poor carpenter from Nazareth turned traveling preacher and rabbi.

But at the Transfiguration, Jesus' body was transformed into the glorious radiance that he had before coming to earth (John 17:5; Philippians 2:6) and which he will have when he returns in glory to establish his kingdom (Revelation 1:14–15).

The glory of Jesus' deity came from within; it was inherent within him because he was and is divine, God's only Son. The glory shone out from him and his homespun clothes *became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.* The white was not of this earth; it was a white that no human had seen.

This was heavenly Clorox bleach-like white...

The words, unique to Mark's Gospel, reflect an eyewitness report (probably Peter's as Mark is his eyewitness account)

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word...

This isn't just revelation of white clothes – this is a revelation of power – extreme Creator like power... → had to be a bit overwhelming to the 3 disciples.

Usually when you're a bit overwhelmed – you either stay quiet or you begin to stutter things... Peter is never one to remain still or quiet – so he's blurting out some things that may seem weird to us...

Q) Have you ever encountered power? We see it in a lot of things/places...

Amy and I got to go stand on Hoover Dam a couple years ago – I had never been before...

Hoover Dam was constructed between 1931 and 1936 during the [Great Depression](#) and was dedicated on September 30, 1935, by President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#).

helps control floods, provide irrigation water and produce [hydroelectric power](#).

Hoover Dam impounds [Lake Mead](#), the largest reservoir in the United States by volume

Hoover Dam generates, on average, about 4 billion kilowatt-hours of hydroelectric power each year for use in Nevada, Arizona, and California - enough to serve 1.3 million people. From 1939 to 1949, Hoover Powerplant was the world's largest hydroelectric installation; today, it is still one of the country's largest.

T Jesus is revealing His power and His glory to these disciples – then He is joined by some familiar faces...

Moses and Elijah showing up would be like royalty showing up at your house party!

Moses represented the Law, or the Old Covenant. He had written the Pentateuch and had predicted the coming of a great prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15–19).

Elijah represented the prophets who had foretold the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5–6).

Moses' and Elijah's presence with Jesus confirmed Jesus' messianic mission to fulfill God's law and the words of God's prophets (Matthew 5:17).

Their appearance also removed any thought that Jesus was a reincarnation of Elijah or Moses.

Peter called Jesus *Rabbi* (Master, Teacher), obviously missing what Jesus was showing them by his revealed glory. **Peter mistakenly made all three men equal. He had missed Jesus' true identity as God himself.**

His words *it is good for us to be here* revealed a further lack of understanding. He desired to prolong the experience, to keep Moses and Elijah there with them. **He wanted to construct a monument and keep everyone there in this moment!**

But that was not the point of the experience nor the lesson to be learned by it.

Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

This was not a vapor cloud, but was, in fact, the glory of God. This was the cloud that had guided Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 13:21), that had appeared to the people in the desert (Exodus 16:10; 24:15–18; 34:5; 40:34–38), that had appeared to Moses (Exodus 19:9), and that had filled the temple with the glory of the Lord (1 Kings 8:10).

God's voice came from the cloud, singling out Jesus from Moses and Elijah as the long-awaited Messiah who possessed divine authority. **In the same way that God's voice in the cloud over Mount Sinai had given authority to his law (Exodus 19:9), God's voice at the Transfiguration gave singular authority to Jesus' words.**

As he had done at Jesus' baptism, God was giving verbal approval of his Son (see 1:11). At that time, the message had been addressed to Jesus (“You are my beloved Son”) and had benefited John the Baptist; here, the voice spoke to Peter and the other two disciples (“This is my Son”). God was identifying Jesus as his dearly loved Son and the promised Messiah.

The voice then commanded Peter and the others to *listen* to Jesus and not to their own ideas and desires about what lay ahead.

The command recalled the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (NIV), and it identified Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of that prophecy.

The Greek verb *akouete*, translated “listen,” **means not merely hearing, but the hearing that leads to obeying what is heard.**

T Then this moment that seemed to come out of nowhere is suddenly gone. And things are back to ‘normal’...

Q) what would have been going through your mind as you watched all this unfold?

Probably so many emotions swirling around – but I want to draw our attention to 3 simple takeaways for us as we examine this moment with Jesus....

Jesus alone is to be the object of our worship

No One or Nothing else is to get our focus in worship – other than Jesus!

He is the fulfillment of the Law – He is the fulfiller of the prophetic words about him.

“listen to him” – aim your life at getting to know Jesus, listen in ways that lead to action, obedience, worship....

Think: Marker Moments -over- Monuments

Those are special moments that can mark God’s revelation and interaction within your life – but they are meant to fuel you forward - - not meant for you to set up camp and make them a monument and stay there the rest of your life.

Life is only lived in one direction – forward.

As you think back over your life – those moments we spoke earlier of where God revealed himself to you (through a verse that spoke to you, something someone shared or did for you, a situation where it was orchestrated and demonstrated God’s care and interaction with you) – those moments are meant to be fuel for you as you move forward!

EX: it’s like mile markers on the highway of life – you can look back and see them, but we’re never meant to pull over – build a monument there and take up residence there. – Isrealites would create these “markers” – like when they crossed over the Jordan river – build this rock pile marker that when they’d see it, they’d remember God’s intervention/interaction and it would stir their heart to worship/honor God – but they didn’t build a monument there and set up camp – they still were to move forward into the promised land...

As you’re able to look back over your life – you can see God’s hand on your life – maybe even in seasons you didn’t notice at the time...

****journaling is a great way to record those marker moments**

This moment was fuel for Jesus as he embarked on the hardest part of his mission. The Cross is before him, endurance is what is needed and it’s why this moment happened. God the Father strengthening him and impressing upon his followers to follow Jesus.

Revelation is about deepening our relational connection WITH Jesus over information collection ABOUT Jesus.

It's about taking us into a deeper relational connection with Christ – not simply stocking up on information about Jesus.

Peter James and John have this moment – and it was meant to fuel them forward in loving Christ and seeing him for He really is. So that, as life progresses and things unfold – they can have an anchor for their faith – because they truly know who Jesus really is.

Not simply knowing more information about him

T Two weeks ago - I ended with a prayer for you – a verse to make a prayer. Tonight I want to end with another one of my absolute favorite prayers from the Bible. This is one that I personally use all the time – it's my life verse – God has used this to reveal himself to me – it's what I desire to be a part of my ministry on this earth

I want people to know God better...more... not just know about him.

Ephesians 1:17

¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Encounter moments are not to become monuments, but they are fuel your relationship with Jesus and your movement forward following Jesus...

T TRANSITION TO COMMUNION

Closing Prayer

OTHER NOTES:

commentary:

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

Jesus did not stay on the mountaintop. On the mountain, Jesus shone with divine glory; in the city he confronted doubt, bewilderment, sickness, and powerlessness. Why not stay on the mountain? Because he responded in compassion to us. He obeyed God the Father's will; thus, he returned to our world to deal with our sinful condition by his death and resurrection.

Jesus was all God and all man; therefore, he lived both on the mountain of transcendent glory and also in the city of great need. Christians today need to worship and pray, but they must also go out into the needy world to serve, work, confront, and intercept Satan just as Jesus did. We must not neglect prayer or service. Both are required of all who follow Jesus

keller's sermon on Mark 9:

1. What do we learn from the transfiguration?

The answer is there are two astonishing things we're taught by the transfiguration: that **Jesus is the object of worship** and the secret of worship. First of all, he's the object of worship. Centuries ago, book of Exodus, Mount Sinai, God comes down on Mount Sinai. Do you know what we see? A cloud. He comes down in a cloud. He speaks out of the cloud, the voice of God.

Everyone is afraid, so Moses goes to the top of the mountain, and up there he begs to see God's glory. He says, "Show me your glory, your perfect, brilliant, bright, infinite greatness

and unimaginable beauty. Show me your glory.” God says in Exodus 33, “When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand till I have passed by, but my face cannot be seen. No one may look upon me and live.”

Moses is not able to see the glory of God, but even getting near ... Because of that, Moses’ face shone with the reflected glory of God for a number of days. Now centuries later, we’re on top of another mountain. There’s glory again, the dazzling brightness. It’s not earthly glory. “... whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.” So there’s heavenly glory. There’s a mountain. There’s a cloud. There’s a voice out of the cloud. We even have Moses back. How much clearer could it be?

So is this just Mount Sinai all over again? No. First of all, there’s an astounding difference.

Moses reflected the glory of God like the moon reflects the light of the sun, but Jesus produces the glory of God. The glory of God emanates from him. He’s the source of it. The unsurpassable and unapproachable glory of God comes from him. What this means is Jesus does not point to the glory of God like Elijah, Moses, the founder of every other religion, and every other prophet; he is the glory of God in human form. It’s an astounding thing. Hebrews 1:3, puts it like this: “He [Jesus] is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of God’s being.” The exact representation. That means Jesus is the ultimate expression, the unsurpassable (nothing higher possible) expression of the infinite, overwhelming superlativeness, glory, and beauty of God. Jesus is the glory of God in human form. Of course, that means he is not just a teacher to follow. Oh, he is that, but he’s infinitely more.

Because of this kind of claim, because he claims all through the Bible, because he makes this kind of claim, Jesus has destroyed your middle ground. Many people have said this. I have said this. We’ll say it again. He is not just a teacher to be followed. If this claim is not true, then you have to reject him as a megalomaniac, but if this claim is true, then you can’t just follow him; you have to center your entire life around him. You have to make him the object of your soul’s ultimate worship. The middle ground is gone.

Secondly, he’s the secret of worship. By that I mean this. There’s a second thing that happens here that never happened on Mount Sinai, and it is absolutely astounding. The glory of God is the cloud. When God came down on Mount Sinai, he came down as a cloud. It was called the shekinah glory. Notice he speaks out of the cloud. That’s his raw presence. That is what everyone has always said is fatal.

When God said to Moses, “You may not look upon my face and live,” what he was saying was, “There is an infinite gap between deity and humanity. There’s a chasm. There’s a gap between us. You can’t take my reality. You can’t take my holiness. You can’t take my glory. It will destroy you.” This is the reason Peter is scared. He is scared to death. It says there he was so scared he didn’t know what he was saying.

He’s scared to death, but he says, “Rabbi, let us put up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” That is an absolutely inexplicable statement unless you realize the word translated shelters here is actually the Greek word tabernacles. See, when God’s glory came down on Mount Sinai, they built a tabernacle. Why? All religions, not just the Bible, have always understood there’s this infinite gap between deity and humanity.

Therefore, all religions have had temples and tabernacles filled with priests and sacrifices and rites and rituals to obey and to transform your consciousness or to take away your sins or something to mediate, to protect us, basically, from the presence of God, to mediate over this gap. So what Peter is actually saying here is, "We need something to protect us. We need a tabernacle. We need to set up sacrifices and things to protect us from the presence of God."

Then, immediately after that, something happens that if you would be reading the Bible all the way through (and whoever does that?) it would shock you. We're told then the cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from within the cloud (this is the shekinah glory cloud) and said, "This is my Son whom I love; listen to him," and they didn't die. How could that be? Here's the answer. "Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus."

That's Mark's way of saying in the strongest terms ... Moses is gone. Elijah is gone. They saw nothing but Jesus. Jesus is not just the God on the other side of the gap; Jesus is the bridge over the gap. Jesus is the temple and tabernacle to end all temples and tabernacles, because he is the sacrifice and priest that has ended all sacrifices and priests.

Through him, the infinite beauty and glory of God can envelop you. See, when the cloud came down, it's not just they didn't die. It wasn't just non-fatal. It was worship. They were surrounded by the brilliance of God. They were surrounded by the reality of God. They were embraced by it, and they heard the glory of God speaking of love, the Father's love for the Son, which is the gospel.

Suddenly it goes away. They sense the reality of God. They see the reality of God. Then suddenly it goes away and they realize Jesus is able to give what Elijah can't give, what Moses can't give, what no one else ever could possibly deliver. Through Jesus you can come into the very heart of the universe. Worship is a foretaste of the thing all of our hearts are longing for, whether we know it or not. We're longing for it in our art. We're longing for it in romance. We're longing for it in the arms of our lovers. We're longing for it through family. C.S. Lewis says in his famous sermon *The Weight of Glory*, "The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory ... becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things.

The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last. [...] Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off ... is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. [...] At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. [...] But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in."

Worship is not just believing. See, what happened to the disciples up there ... They already believed in God. Peter had already said, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." But they sensed it. They saw it. They were surrounded by the reality. The very presence of God enveloped them. That is a foretaste of what Lewis says all of us are looking for: someday sitting, as it were, on God's lap, someday coming into his arms, someday being literally embraced by him and surrounded and enveloped by him and his love.

Welcome into the heart of things, into the heart of the universe. Jesus is not just the object of our worship; he's the secret of our worship. That's what we learn. Wow, how spectacular. But almost immediately we see how practical this is.

2. Why do we need to know this?

One of the reasons the passage is so long ... We're not just going to look at the passage on the transfiguration. We also want to look at what Mark puts immediately after the transfiguration, and I think it's because we're learning something here. The disciples have had a mountaintop experience. They've literally had a mountaintop experience. In fact, it could be this is where we get the term mountaintop experience, I suppose.

As soon as they come off the mountain, they're plunged into confusion, evil (here's a demon), and what's most interesting about what's happening here are the problems. People are arguing about it. There are the Pharisees. There are the teachers of the law in verse 14, and they're arguing. We don't even know what they're arguing about. There are the disciples, and they're trying to exorcise a demon, and it's not working. This isn't Peter, James, and John who went up to the Mount of Transfiguration. These are the rest of the disciples.

In other words, they're surrounded by evil, everybody is confused, and they don't have the ability to handle their challenges. So they come off this mountain, and immediately they're plunged into this situation. In fact, the same thing happens in the book of Exodus. When Moses comes off the mountain from seeing God, he immediately comes down into the camp, and there they are worshipping the golden calf.

Keller's Book:

Centuries prior to this event, according to the book of Exodus in the Old Testament, God came down on Mount Sinai in a cloud. The voice of God spoke out of the cloud, and everyone was afraid. Moses went to the top of the mountain and begged to see God's glory: "Show me your glory—your infinite greatness and unimaginable beauty." And God responded, "When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by, but my face cannot be seen. No one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:18-23). Moses was not able to see God's glory directly. But even getting near was enough to make Moses's face shine with the reflected glory of God. Now, centuries later, we're on top of another mountain and there's glory again. This dazzling brightness makes Jesus's clothes "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." There's a mountain, a voice out of a cloud—and even Moses makes an appearance. Is this Mount Sinai all over again? Moses had reflected the glory of God as the moon reflects the light of the sun. But Jesus produces the unsurpassable glory of God; it emanates from him. Jesus does not point to the glory of God as Elijah, Moses, and every other prophet has done; Jesus is the glory of God in human form. The author of the book of Hebrews puts it like this: "The Son [Jesus] is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3). Something else happens here that never happened on Mount Sinai—Peter, James, and John are in the presence of God and yet they do not die. On Mount Sinai, God came down as a cloud. It was called "the shekinah glory"; do you remember it from the holy of holies where the high priest atoned for the sins of the people of Israel? He spoke out of the cloud—it was his raw presence, which the Israelites knew was fatal. When God told Moses, "No one can see my face and live," he was saying that there's an infinite gap between deity and humanity. "You can't take my reality," said God; "you can't endure the presence of my holiness, my glory. It would destroy you."

This is why, here on the mountain where Jesus is “transfigured” (this scene is generally known as the transfiguration), Peter is scared. So scared he doesn’t know what he’s saying, according to Mark. He stammers out, “Rabbi . . . let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” To us that’s a baffling proposal—so let’s explore it. The word translated shelters here is actually the Greek word for tabernacle. After God’s glory came down on Mount Sinai, the Hebrew people built a tabernacle.

Why? Most religions have recognized that there’s a wide gap of some kind between deity and humanity. Therefore many religions have temples (or tabernacles) with priests and sacrifices and rituals to transform your consciousness or take away your sin—to mediate the gap and protect human beings from the divine presence. What Peter is actually saying here is, “We need a tabernacle, we need to set up rituals, to protect us from the presence of God.” Immediately after Peter says this, a cloud appears and envelops Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. And from within the shekinah glory cloud, God says, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

Yet Peter, James, and John do not die. How could that be?

“Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.” That’s Mark’s way of saying: Moses is gone, Elijah is gone, and Jesus is the bridge over the gap between God and humanity. Jesus is able to give what Elijah couldn’t give, what Moses couldn’t give, what no one else could ever deliver. Through Jesus, we can cross the gap into the very heart of reality, of God’s presence. Jesus is the temple and tabernacle to end all temples and tabernacles, because he is the sacrifice to end all sacrifices, the ultimate priest to point the way.

When the cloud comes down, not only do the disciples not die, they are surrounded and embraced by the brilliance of God. They hear God the Father speaking of his love for the Son, just as he did when Jesus was baptized at the beginning of Mark. Then suddenly the cloud goes away, and they are left standing there blinking in the comparatively dim light of the mountaintop, in a state of electrified wonder. James, Peter, and John have experienced worship. Worship is a preview of the thing that all of our hearts .

Worship is not just believing. Before they went up the mountain, Peter, James, and John already believed in God. And Peter had already said, “You are the Christ.” But now they have sensed it. The presence of God has enveloped them. They have had a foretaste of what Lewis says all of us are longing for: the very face and embrace of God.

And on the mountain, through the Spirit, God was strengthening Jesus for his mission, for the infinite suffering he would endure to defeat all evil. And God can empower us in the same way to face evil and overcome our own suffering. You may know in your head that God loves you—but sometimes the Spirit makes it especially clear to you that that is the case. Sometimes you go to the mountain. Sometimes through the Spirit you can hear God make a statement of unconditional, permanent, intimate love. Sometimes you don’t just know about God’s love but in your heart you actually hear God saying, “You’re my daughter, you’re my son, I love you. I would go to infinite cost and infinite depths not to lose you—and I have.”

Romans 8

Sermon ideas:

Their first impulse was to stay put on that mountain top with all the glory around them. Their first impulse was stay where they were. Their first impulse was to stay in this glory, to stay put, to bask in the glory of God.

The mountain top experience for the disciples was glorious. They wanted to stay, to stay and worship what they saw and hear.

And many times we as Christians want that mountain top experience in our faith life. We want that glorious feeling of being with Christ.

Some Christians feel that if their life or those around them are not always glorious, something is wrong with their faith or the faith of those around them. This theology of glory says that if you are not healthy, wealthy, feeling good because of Jesus then something is wrong, either with you or your faith. If you are with Jesus everything is good, great, glorious.

But Jesus did not see it that way. After the experience on the mountain, what did he do? He went down the mountain and set his face for Jerusalem and the cross. Jesus knew that it is good to have those mountain top experiences, but the real work is in the valleys, in the depth of the human condition of sin and brokenness. – **compassion finds traction in the valleys, it gets refilled on the mountaintops.**

Mark 9:1-9:9

The Power of vision series, Vision keeps us healthy
Eric A. Snyder, Minister Farwell Church of Christ
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About 350 years ago a shipload of travelers landed on the northeast coast of America. The first year they established a town site. The next year they elected a town government. The third year the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness.

In the fourth year the people tried to impeach their town government because they thought it was a waste of public funds to build a road five miles westward into a wilderness. Who needed to go there anyway?

Here were people who had the vision to see three thousand miles across an ocean and overcome great hardships to get there. But in just a few years they were not able to see even five miles out of town. They had lost their pioneering vision. With a clear vision of what we can become in Christ, no ocean of difficulty is too great. Without it, we rarely move beyond our current boundaries.

A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

Mark 9:1-9 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." 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. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 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. Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" 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.

Prayer

I. Disciples wanted to stay on the mountain

Its easy to identify with these Guys here because they wanted to stay on the mountain longer. That's natural whenever we are in a good place we tend to resist something newer because we fear losing what we have. But Jesus wants us to see the whole picture.

I have these pictures on my wall at home they are called Photomosaics, each picture is composed of little, very small pictures of a variety of different objects, and when you stand back you can see the whole picture. Vision is a lot like that. There are a number of small pictures but Jesus has a larger picture in mind.

Peter says let's build some places to worship. We could stay here forever. Which might be tempting when we encounter something incredible.

However, it tells us a more complete picture of what vision does. We know that vision brings clarity, but it only brings clarity when it is fully understood and then embraced.

Peter's statement here is premature because he has not seen the whole picture. He has only seen part of the picture. It is at this point that he begins to form his own idea of the future.

1. Vision brings change when it is fully understood, because we seek to align our vision with the vision that God has set for us.

That's why you were so inspired in your experiencing God study, Because you were seeking the direction that God is going and are desiring to join Him there. We need to grasp picture and understand that we cannot stay on the mountain forever.

Change does not mean that we change the message of truth. The old story still is a bedrock for faith here. However out methods must change.

In the past 50 years we have seen an incredible difference in churches, families and society. People have moved away from denominational loyalty and toward churches that are driven with mission and multiple staff.

We have moved away from a society where people put front porches on their homes and sit outside and talk to the neighbors. To a society where people build back decks and build privacy fences.

We have moved into a society where e-mail is more used than postal mail. Where you can shop without talking to anyone else.

We are in an economy where people may be forced to work during church activities. A generation that can have a meal in under 60 seconds. We live in an era that has massive media and technological improvements yet all of this progress we thought we were getting more time for family, friends, faith and fun. But we have ended up with less. These are all issues of changing life that the church must learn to deal with.

2. Vision brings completeness it is only after this experience is complete that the disciples were able to finally understand what God was trying to say. Peter looks up and sees 3 of his 2 of his favorite characters talking with his friend and gets ahead of the plan. Do you think the direct audible voice told Peter that Jesus was of first importance?
I notice that at this point Peter decides to be quiet. Now he will have some healthy questions later on but he now has a more complete picture of what God wants him to know.

3 . Vision brings conflict when it is not fully understood or embraced. Deciding to only own part of the vision will result in fear and frustration. Using the word vision is not enough to ignite a small group or Sunday worship, it must be a word that is packed with meaning. It must not be used as a hollow word to motivate people for the short term. Jesus has given his followers a vision statement for the rest of their lives. It is a statement that they will use to rate the effectiveness and meaning in their ministries. It is a ruler to which they must measure themselves.

Each church has a different vision for the future, the truth is that adding staff is not vision, building a building is not vision, adding church programs are not vision. They are aids to assist in the true vision and they are steps to help accomplish God's vision for the church. True vision is specific and states where we are going, but it is not encumbered by the hindrances of time.

God has given us a vision.

It is a vision that leaves no one behind.

It is a vision of promise and hope

It is a vision that demands the involvement of people in ministry

It is a vision that reaches out to a community in need of meaning

It is a vision that allows God to build an environment where people can experience his presence is Worship, Small groups and Service.

There must be a draw for our Guests to desire to return

There should be a good reason for you to come, this should be a place where you find answers to get through the week

This should be a place where you are encouraged to seek Jesus personally

II. The vision is on the mountain

But after vision is understood on the mountain it is our responsibility to take that vision to everyday life. The picture of the future must be articulated when the time is right. When the leaders are in full understanding of God's plan. That is probably why Jesus asks his disciples to not say anything until he is resurrected.

This wouldn't make complete sense to them until it was completed in his rising from the dead. You see later in this text they were talking about what the resurrection of the dead had to do with everything.

Once it is fully grasped it needs to be articulated effectively

Vision brings communication
Healthy churches communicate

One person wrote that there are some of us love to take the simple and make it complex. Some of us thrive on taking perfectly obvious matters and making them as obscure as possible. My neighbor's car has on it a bumper sticker that says, "Eschew obfuscation". After about a half-hour with the dictionary, I found out that means, "Keep it simple, stupid."

Vision needs to be spoken in a way that is understood by all.
Clear communication and interactive dialog is required in moving forward. Everyone needs to have a clear picture of what is happening.

When a church is not clear about vision and purpose all progress grinds to a halt and the church is still for a while. There are two main causes in miscommunication in the church.

Either the people are not hearing or the leaders are not clear.

There was a man who lived up in upstate New York and he was getting tired of the cold weather, so he decided to go to Florida. His wife was on a business trip at the time so he called her to let her know what he was doing and to tell her not to go back to New York but to meet him in Florida.

When he arrived he sent her an e-mail to let her know he was there, but he got a few letters wrong in the address and instead of going to his wife the e-mail went to a little old lady in Iowa, who was a pastor's wife. And whose husband had died the day before.

The little old lady turned on her computer, read the e-mail, screamed and fainted right on the spot. Her family and friends who were there came in saw her on the floor and when they read the screen they understood why she fainted..

„« Dearest darling just wanted you to know I arrived safely
„« Looking forward to you being with me, tomorrow
„« Signed, your husband PS, it sure is hot down here»K

The vision is on the mountain, you can see forever, being alone with God should refocus your efforts for his plan for your life when some tough questions are answered.

The mountain allows for incredible sight, the vision needs to find it's way to the valley

III. The ministry is in the valley

Ministry takes place where we get our hands dirty, where God's plan and purpose for the future is drawn up, executed and lived out.

After you have understood the vision you have to go back to the valley of need. So you need to identify your valley of need.

Where is it that you do ministry? Is it in the routine at work that tries your patience and tests your integrity?

Is it in your home life that frustrates your spirit and compromises your completeness?

Is it among friends that damage your self worth and keep you ashamed?

Where is your valley of ministry. What will you do differently to minister more effectively?

Vision brings commitment. Once we understand what God desires to do with us personally we will become more committed to his plan for our life. As a church body when we fully grasp his plan for our future we will become naturally committed to Him and His goals for this church as well.

When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of Britain with his Roman legions, he took a bold and decisive step to ensure the success of his military venture. Ordering his men to march to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover, he commanded them to look down at the water below. To their amazement, they saw every ship in which they had crossed the channel engulfed in flames. Caesar had deliberately cut off any possibility of retreat. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but to advance and conquer! And that is exactly what they did.

True vision does not completely ignore the past, it builds on it and learns from it.

Ministry and vision are about people. Finding people and pointing them to Jesus.

MARK 9:2-9 THE MOUNTAIN BEFORE THE VALLEY

Life is filled with peaks and valleys. A peak is something excellent that happens in your life, something great, something to celebrate and remember. The birth of your child – that is a highpoint in your life. The day you get married – that is a peak. During those moments, it's easy to be a Christian. "God is good," you think to yourself. There's no doubt in your mind that God is blessing you.

But life isn't one peak after another. There are the valleys too. The troubles of life. Those difficult moments. When you have been diagnosed with cancer – that's a valley. When a loved one dies – that's a valley. During those moments, it's more difficult to be a Christian sometimes. When you're in the valley, it's hard to say, "God is good." Sometimes your faith is shaken. There's some doubt there, when you're in a valley, that God is blessing you and those around you.

Peaks and valleys – where are you right now? Are you on top of a peak? Or are you in a valley? Maybe you're somewhere in between – maybe there's a peak or a valley for you right around the corner, and you don't even know it. The disciples of Jesus Christ had no idea that they were about to enter a valley – they were about to go through a low-point with Christ. Things with Jesus seemed to be going so well – he had performed miracles – walking on the water, feeding the 5000. He had been surrounded by crowds of people, listening to his parables. It was easy to be a disciple of Jesus at that time. There was no doubt that this was the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The disciples were experiencing one high-point after another with Jesus.

But right around the corner loomed the valley of the shadow of death. The crowds would soon turn against Jesus. He'd be betrayed, and arrested, and tortured, and publicly condemned, and executed in the most shameful way known to man at that time. The valley was right around the corner. The disciples would be filled with fear and doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. Soon, it would be very difficult to be a disciple of Christ. A deep, dark valley was right around the corner, and the disciples had no idea.

And so that is why today, Jesus takes them to the top of a mountain. He lets them experience something amazing – with their own eyes, they catch a glimpse of his glory. Right before the valley, Jesus takes them to a mountain, to a high point, and he does this to strengthen them for the difficult road ahead. Today, it is good for us to go on this journey with those disciples too, and experience with them this high point, for two reasons.

First of all, it prepares us for Lent. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is this Wednesday. Up until this time, you have heard about Christ, how powerful he is, what a great teacher he is, how he is, without a doubt, the Son of God and Savior of the World. But now it is Lent, that time in the church year when Jesus descends into the valley of the shadow of death. You're going to hear about how he was rejected. How he was weak. How he suffered and died for the sins of the world. These next six weeks, we are going to walk with Jesus, into that valley, and see those difficult moments. This mountain-top experience we hear about today prepares us for the valley ahead.

It also prepares us for something else – our own personal valleys. As we see Jesus glorified here today, it prepares us when we go through our own difficult moments. May God bless you this day, as you stand with those disciples and see Jesus reveal his glory – may your faith be strengthened, for the days ahead, as you prepare for all the different peaks and valleys in your life.

Mark 9 verse 2: "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." The word "transfigure" means that Jesus' appearance completely changed. The other gospels tell us that his face changed. "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." Another Gospel writer tells us that Jesus' clothes became "as bright as a flash of lightning." At that moment, Jesus revealed his deity. He was the holy, almighty God, and the brightness of his appearance revealed that to his disciples. This was good, because soon the disciples would see Jesus dirty and bloody and weak and dying. During that time, it would seem as though Jesus was a lowly man. But here it is clear, as he shines brighter than the sun – he is God – holy, almighty, and powerful.

“And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.” The other Gospels tell us that they were talking about his future death and resurrection and ascension. These were two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. Once again, this was good for the disciples to see. Soon, people would be saying that Jesus was against the prophets, that Jesus had nothing to do with the prophets. But here it is clear – Elijah, Moses, and Jesus – they are speaking together about his imminent departure.

What an amazing high point for those disciples to experience. Peter wanted this moment to last forever. He wasn’t really sure what to say or what to do, so he said, “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.”

But that idea wasn’t even a possibility. Instead, “a bright cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!’” The disciples were surrounded by a bright fog, and then they heard the voice of God the Father himself. It must have been an amazing thing, to hear the voice of God the Father. They heard the Father say that Jesus really is his Son, that he was loved, and that they should listen to him. Once again, this was good for those disciples to hear. Soon, people would be saying that Jesus was not the Son of God. Soon, it would seem as though God the Father didn’t love Christ. The religious leaders would be saying that no one should listen to Jesus. But here it is clear – none of that is true – this is the true Son of God, loved by the Father, whose words are words that we should listen to.

And then, just as quickly as it began, this moment ended: “Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.” This was a high point for those disciples, a peak – they saw Christ in all his glory, surrounded by the prophets, and acclaimed by God the Father. This would help and strengthen them as they continued on with Jesus into the valley of the shadow of death.

And this helps us as well. As we enter the Lenten season this Wednesday, we will watch Jesus battle with Satan, and we will see him eventually become weak and die. Here today we are reminded that Jesus is the Son of God, the holy one spoken of by the prophets. Although he will be suffering and dying, he is still God and Savior, doing these things to win for us our salvation.

This also helps us as we go through our own personal peaks and valleys in life. I do not know where you are right now – if you are experiencing a high moment, or a low moment. And I don’t know where you will be two years from now – what high moments or low moments you will be going through. In reality, neither do you. For us today, right now, it is good for us to be here, because here we are reminded of our Savior’s glory, who he really is.

The disciples needed to climb a mountain to see this. Today, God’s Word is your mountain to climb. Every time you come here, to church, and you hear the Word of God, you have climbed the mountain. Here, you see Christ, who has taken your sins away on the cross and who has risen from the dead. Here you catch a glimpse of his glory, even if it’s just for a moment. Sunday morning worship – the Word of God – this is your mountain top. It is good for you to be here, because this is where you are strengthened for the days ahead, for all the peaks and valleys that are around the corner for you.

The American evangelist Dwight L. Moody told the story about a Christian woman who was always bright and cheerful and optimistic, even though she was confined to her room because of an illness. She lived in an attic apartment on the fifth floor of an old, rundown building. A friend decided to visit her one day and brought along another woman - a person of great wealth. Since there was no elevator, the two ladies began the long climb upward. When they reached the second floor, the well-to-do woman commented, "What a dark and filthy place!" Her friend replied, "It's better higher up." When they arrived at the third floor landing, the remark was made: "Things look even worse here." Again the reply: "It's better higher up." Finally they reached the attic level, where they found the bedridden saint of God. A smile on her face radiated the joy that filled her heart.

Although the room was clean and flowers were on the windowsill, the wealthy visitor could not contain herself about the stark surroundings and blurted out: "It must be very difficult for you to be here like this!" Without a moment's hesitation the shut-in responded: "It will be better higher up." Right now, she was in a valley, but she was not looking at temporal things. With her eyes of faith fixed on the eternal, she had found the secret of true satisfaction and contentment. Where did she get this strength? This perspective? She had been with Jesus in his Word. She had seen his glory on the mountain top. May that same glory you have seen today transform you. Amen.