

Because He Set Aside His Glory, You Will Have Glory! Mark 9:2-9 Pastor Thomas Kock 02/19/12 Transfiguration

Glory to God in the highest! And on earth – peace! For God’s favor rests upon us humans. Amen. The Word of God for our consideration is today’s Gospel reading, from the book of Mark, chapter 9. (read text.) In the name of Jesus, THE Son of God, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are certain times in life, certain events in life which cause our perspective to change. Perhaps it’s graduating from high school (or maybe even grade school), and the recognition that a “chapter in our life” has closed, and we’re moving forward into a more adult world. Taking a new job, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, a health scare – all sorts of events in this world can cause our perspective to change, sometimes dramatically so.

I wonder if the disciples needed a change of perspective regarding Jesus? Think about it. Scripture tells us that Jesus was made like his brothers in every way (yet, was without sin.) (cf. Hebrews 2) Day by day Jesus walked alongside of them, eating as they ate, sleeping as they slept, laughing, talking, crying, etc. He was a normal guy! And I’d guess it was pretty easy for the disciples to kind of lose perspective as to just who this Jesus was.

In fact, in the days leading up to this event, Jesus had been talking to His disciples about the future, specifically, about how He was going to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Peter had then taken Jesus aside and rebuked Him. Now, stop and think about that. *Who* is rebuking *whom*? Peter – a sinful human – was rebuking Jesus, the true God! Yes, a *human* was rebuking *God*! Can you imagine the craziness of that? That’s downright ridiculous!

And so perhaps that’s the reason that Jesus takes the boys up onto the Mount of Transfiguration, and gives them quite a change of perspective. Jesus changes! His clothes are gleaming white! Matthew’s gospel tells us that His face was shining like the sun! Moses and Elijah are there talking with Jesus about the things which are about to take place, perhaps thanking Him for His work on their behalf! God the Father speaks: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!”

Do you wonder if perhaps Peter’s mind thought back to the prior week, when he’d taken Jesus aside and rebuked Him? Can you imagine His consternation – indeed, terror – as he now sees a bit more clearly whom it was that He was rebuking? Do you think he might have done about anything in the world to have undone that event? Oh, I’m guessing! Do you think this perspective-changing event might have helped him? Oh, I’m sure!

And perhaps it’s something which you and I need to see/hear, too. It’s oh-so-easy to get comfortable with sin. It’s oh-so-easy to slip into thinking that it’s not big deal for me to ... lust, cheat, steal, be in an immoral relationship, fail to love my spouse, fail to put God and His Word first, etc, etc, etc. In short, we slip into thinking that it’s okay if we’re NOT listening to God and His Word and putting that into practice. And every time we do so, we’re “rebuking God,” similar to Peter.

And then we see the Transfiguration. This is GOD about whom we’re talking! This is the ALMIGHTY, HOLY God whom we’re rebelling against! And He makes it clear that to continue to live purposefully in a state of rebellion against God is to invite eternal damnation, to invite the fires of hell, forever.

Do we remember that? Do we remember just whom it is that we’re rebelling against? Do we remember just how huge the stakes are in this, that they’re eternal? Or do we need a change in perspective, like those disciples seemed to need? If we need that change in perspective, then Transfiguration Day helps us. It reminds us just whom we are sinning against. Yes, it gives us the reminder that someday we’ll have to stand in front of this glorious, holy God ourselves. And that glorious, holy God won’t be any more impressed by our rebuke than He was with Peter’s rebuke. We would be face down on the ground, terrified, just like Peter, James, and John.

But then they looked up and all they saw ... was Jesus! The glory was again hidden, his clothing was normal once again. Elijah and Moses were nowhere to be seen. And then Jesus makes a strange-sounding statement, telling them not to tell anyone about this until He’d risen from the dead.

Risen from the dead? They had just seen glory like they’d never seen it before! What in the world did “death” have in common with this Jesus, who had such stupendous glory? This glorious One could die? Would die? How could that be?

Yes, it’s reasonable to ask that question, to wonder about that. But in the next couple months, we’re going to watch exactly that unfold. For you see, Jesus didn’t take Peter’s advice and stay on the mountain. Once again, the advice from the sinful human was dead wrong.

Instead, Jesus walked down the Mount of Transfiguration. And for what purpose? So that He could walk purposefully to Jerusalem. Oh, He knew exactly what awaited Him there – sufferings and crucifixion. But He went anyway.

And during the next couple months we're going to watch it unfold. We'll see Jesus undergoing terrible sufferings. We'll see Him being rejected over and over again. We'll see Him in such stress that His sweat will be like great drops of blood. We'll see Him whipped and beaten, one of His own will sell Him, another of His own will deny Him, the rest of His followers will run away and abandon Him. He'll die in the most humiliating of manners, nailed to a cross.

And this is who? Who will be doing all of that? Yeah, it's the same Jesus who was up on the Mt of Transfiguration! It's the same Jesus whose clothes were gleaming like the light, whose face was shining like the sun! It's the same glorious, powerful Son of God!

Which gives us a whole new perspective concerning the love of God for us humans. As we watch Jesus going to the cross, no, that's not merely a human being dying for a cause. Rather, it's the all-powerful God, taking our place under God's judgement, suffering the punishment which we deserved, paying for our sins in full. It's the all-powerful God who was willing to set aside His glory. It's the all-powerful God who wanted to save you. It's the all-powerful God who wanted to win eternal life for you. It's the all-powerful God who loves you this much.

And we will want to remember that as we walk through lent. As we remember that this is the all-powerful God who is suffering, we'll be even more amazed, even more appreciative, even more thankful for what's happening. For this Jesus – this glorious Jesus! – certainly had the power to stop every single bit of the suffering if He had chosen to.

But He chose not to stop it. He chose to endure it; He loves you that dearly.

We'd be remiss if we failed to make one last point. Moses and Elijah were there talking with Jesus – and they didn't seem to be the least bit afraid. Yes, Jesus was showing His glory – or at least, a glimpse of it – but it didn't seem to faze them at all.

And someday, it won't faze you, either. Someday you will be able to see Jesus' glory – or at least, this much of it – and it won't bother you. Why so? Because not only will God have forgiven you, but He will have completely cleansed you of all the vestiges of sin. You will be able to look at your God face-to-face.

And why so? All because the glorious, holy, almighty God was willing to lay aside His glory and power and instead go the cross. Because He set aside His glory, you will have glory. Amen.