

**Text:** Mark 9:2-9  
**Theme:** It is Good for Us to Remain Here  
**Minister:** Reverend Dele Agbelusi  
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The story of the Transfiguration is one of the least-known stories about Jesus. Everybody hears hundreds of times about the Lord's birth, death, and resurrection, but very few people ever get to know the details of the Transfiguration. Even in art, this great event gets passed over. Unlike other events in our Lord's life which frequently become the subject of art, there are less than a handful of works of art to depict the Transfiguration.

Some people assume that Jesus took these three aside on this and other occasions because they were special favourites of the Lord. It is unclear from the text why the Lord chose them. It could also have been because they were the three most likely to get into trouble, so He kept them close so He could keep a close eye on them, or that they had shown themselves especially spiritually responsive to the illumination they had already been given (Cf. Peter's declaration in Mark 8:29).

### **Verses 2-3**

**Jesus led them up on a high mountain.** What started as a mountain retreat quickly changed as Jesus was transfigured before them.

**What exactly happened here?** "His garments became radiant," or gleaming, "and exceedingly white.", and whiter than anything seen on this earth. Matthew says that Jesus' "*face shone like the sun*" (Matthew 17:2). For this brief time, Jesus took on an appearance more appropriate for the King of Glory than for a humble man.

If we're not careful, we will think of the transfiguration as just a bright light shining on Jesus. But this wasn't a light coming on Jesus from the outside. "*The word transfigured describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. It is the opposite of 'masquerade,' which is an outward change that does not come from within.*" (Wiersbe) The Greek word for transfigured is similar in its meaning to the English word "metamorphosis" – the concept being that of change of form.

**How did this happen?** This was not a *new* miracle, but the temporary pause of an on-going miracle. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could *keep* from displaying His glory.

*"For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for him to restrain or hide his glory. It is forever his glory that he concealed his glory; and that, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor." (Spurgeon)*

**Why did Jesus do this, and why at this time?** Because Jesus just told His disciples that He was going the way of the cross (Mark 8:31), and that spiritually they should follow Him in the way of the cross (Mark 8:34-38). It would have been easy for them to lose confidence in Jesus after such a “negative” statement.

**But now, as Jesus displays His glory as King over all God’s Kingdom, the disciples know that Jesus knows what He is doing; if He is to suffer, be rejected and killed, He is still in control.**

Jesus also shows in a dramatic way that cross bearers will be glory receivers. The *goal* isn’t the cross. **The cross is the path to the goal, and the goal is the glory of God.**

The deity of our Lord has always been questioned and doubted. Even the disciples were slow to come around, slow to know him in truth. Saint John recorded for us an incident which happened shortly before our Lord’s death, one that shows how unsure the disciples still were of the Lord’s true identity. Jesus told them, *“I go to prepare a place for you”*. In response to this great good news, Thomas said, *“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, how can we know the way?”* (John 14:5) and Philip added, *“Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied!”* In great frustration, Jesus said to him, *“Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”* To Thomas Jesus said, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14:1-11).

#### **Verse 4: Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus.**

##### **Why Elijah and Moses?**

- i. **Because they represent those who are caught up to God (Jude 9; 2 Kings 2:11).** Moses represents those who die and go to glory, and Elijah represents those who are caught up to heaven without death (as in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- ii. **They also represent the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah).** The sum of Old Testament revelation comes to meet with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration.
- iii. **Right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life.** When they saw Moses and Elijah, they knew that Moses had passed from this world 1,400 years before and Elijah had passed some 900 years before. Yet there they were, alive in glory before them. It gave them confidence in Jesus’ claim to resurrection.
- iv. **How did the disciples know that it was Elijah and Moses?** It seems that they just knew. This shows us that we will know each other when we get to heaven. After all, do you think we’ll be dumber in heaven than we are on earth?

##### **What did they talk about?**

Elijah and Moses were interested in the outworking of God’s plan through Jesus. They spoke about the way in which Jesus would soon fulfil God’s purpose by dying in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

#### **Verses 5-10**

Here in Mark, Peter called Jesus *“Rabbi”*. In Matthew, He is *“Lord”* (Kyrie 17:4) and Luke’s form of address is *“Master”* (Epistata 9:33). Clearly in the present passages, these three terms must be considered synonyms: all aim to do justice to the exalted character of the Saviour. (Hendriksen)

When Peter saw Jesus in His glory, the excitement must have been overwhelming. He must have said to himself: 'Yes. This is how it should be for the Messiah. Forget this business about suffering, being rejected, and crucified! Let's build some tabernacles so we can live this way with the glorified Jesus all the time.' But Peter really got it wrong.

I wonder whether he thought about the other disciples. Don't we do similar things? We want to monopolize the Grace of God. We want all the good things to be for us and those close to us alone! We think that as far as our immediate concerns are addressed by God, the world can head to anywhere. But we are wrong. God has His own plans which are for all humanity and he intends to bring us to that state where we have His mind-set on eternal issues. **The Gospel is for sharing and not for hoarding.**

What Peter said was so foolish because he put Jesus on an equal level with Elijah and Moses - one tabernacle for each! But Jesus isn't just another Moses or Elijah, or even a *greater* Moses or Elijah. Jesus is the Son of God. He belongs to an entirely unique class. If Jesus talks about many mansions in His Father's house, so many that He is going to prepare a place for all His followers (John 14:6), definitely a shelter built by Peter borders on the ludicrous.

But a cloud suddenly formed, overshadowing all the people on the mountain; and a voice coming from the cloud said, *"This is My beloved Son, Listen to Him."* (v.7)

The cloud that appeared is a familiar cloud, the cloud of God's glory traditionally known as the *Shekinah*:

- It was the cloud of glory that God spoke to Israel from (Exodus 16:10)
- It was from this cloud of glory that God met with Moses and others (Exodus 19:9, 24:15-18, Numbers 11:25, 12:5, 16:42)
- It was from this cloud that God appeared to the High Priest in the Holy Place inside the veil (Leviticus 16:2)
- It was from this cloud God appeared to Solomon when the temple was dedicated, so filling the temple that the priests could not continue ministering (1 Kings 8:10-11, 2 Chronicles 5:13-14)
- It was the cloud of Ezekiel's vision, filling the temple of God with the brightness of His glory (Ezekiel 10:4)
- It was the cloud of glory that received Jesus into heaven at His ascension (Acts 1:9)
- It was the cloud that will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to this earth (Luke 21:27)

The voice from the cloud of glory makes it clear that Jesus is not on the same level as Elijah and Moses. He is the **beloved Son** - so **Hear Him!**

*"There are thousands of priests in the world who say, 'Hear us'; but the Father says 'Hear him.' Many voices clamor for our attention: new philosophies, modern theologies, and old heresies revived, all call to us and entreat us to hearken, but the Father says, 'Hear him.'"*  
(Spurgeon)

This word from heaven answered the disciples' doubts after the revelation of the suffering Messiah. It assured them that the plan was all right with God the Father also.

*“The disciples wished to detain Moses and Elijah that they might hear them: but God shows that the law which had been in force, and the prophets which had prophesied, until now, must all give place to Jesus; and he alone must now be attended to, as the way, the truth, and the life.” (Clarke)*

The voice that descends on this mountaintop gathering is intended to be the same as that which spoke at Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:11). At the baptism event, however, the voice is directed only toward Jesus. **Here the voice’s message is clearly directed toward the disciples. The message spoken by this heavenly voice has two parts. It clearly articulates Jesus’ divine identity “This is my Son, the Beloved” but then goes on to give the disciple-witnesses a precise command: “Listen to him.”**

Peter wanted to do something he figured would be beneficial to Christ – a form of service. But God says, “I don’t need you running here and there to build booths or tabernacle for me. I just want you to listen to my Son, and whatever He says, do.

The conclusion of the Transfiguration scene provides the disciples with their first opportunity to obey the heavenly voice’s command and “listen to” Jesus. The first instruction Jesus offers his wondering disciples is to keep quiet: “Tell no one about what they had seen” on the mountaintop. Only when the proper conditions had been fulfilled, when “the Son of Man had risen from the dead,” (v.9) are the disciples to speak about what they had witnessed with their eyes and ears.

### **So, what do we make of this glorious event?**

That Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets. Remember what the writer of Hebrews said: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Heb. 1:1, 2)*

**That there are times when God suddenly breaks into our lives** and gives us a preview of what is to come. The disciples were given a glimpse of what the future held. At that very special moment they saw an amazing sight, a combination of heaven and earth, time and all eternity. All Peter could say was, *“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here!”* Such mountaintop experiences are rare, but they do happen.

**At that moment Peter heard what he did not want to hear, “Listen to him.”** Peter had rebuked Jesus earlier when Jesus had spoken of his suffering and death (Mark 8:32). But now God was saying, *“Listen to him.”* Peter didn’t want to “listen”, not to news of Christ’s death. This was an awful truth he did not want to confront, but he knew he must. There are some truths that necessarily mean change. As you listen God’s Word, and hear Him, as we are reminded last week, are we willing to change?

This brings us to the last thing we want to say - **Mountaintop experiences should prepare us for life in the valleys.**

Peter must have come to the mountain-top with his fears, doubts and concerns about the future. The person he had confessed was the Son of God, in whose hands his life was talking about suffering in the hands of ordinary people to the point that he would be killed. If that was going to be the fate of the Messiah, how terrible would his be! So, on a positive score for Peter, the transfiguration of Jesus put his expectations and desires and doubts in a right perspective. He no longer cared about the future as long as he was with the Master, for ever. That is what happens when we are enveloped by the glory of God in a mountain-top experience. As you come to meet the Lord Sunday after Sunday, are you caught up in His glory like Peter or do wish the Service should come quickly to an end to enable you continue with your routines?

The time came for Jesus and his three disciples to come down off the mountain. As Peter, James, and John descended the mountain they pondered the significance of what they had just experienced. My guess is that they walked back down in silence. They were too filled with wonder. As they came down off the mountain, Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone of their recent experience, *“until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead”* (Mark 9:9). The time would come when they would tell everyone, but the time wasn't right yet. Jesus and the disciples still had work to do. However brief the experience was they were given a glimpse of the future. Those who have seen the future are better prepared to live in the present.

The focus of the story ends where it must end -- on Jesus, who is the suffering servant in whom is the fulfilment of God's eternal promises. He is the Saviour of the world, and our mediator and advocate. Do you know this Jesus? Have you received Him into your life? To enjoy the glory of God in eternity, you must go through the path of the cross, Jesus' Cross. There is no other way!