

A Glimpse of Glory -Mark 9:1-13

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please get in touch with Pastor Derek at dberry@calvarybaptistsc.church.]

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Mark 9:1...

English actor, comedian, and director Stephen Fry was asked what he would say to Jesus when he faced him. His reply, "Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God who creates a world that's so full of injustice and pain? That's what I'd say." Well-known MMA fighter Conor McGregor was asked how he would fair in an MMA match against Jesus. He responded, "There's not a man alive who could beat me. But Jesus ain't alive, is he? Maybe he could come back from the dead, I don't know. I'd still whop his (explicit)." And, of course, John Lennon once said that "Christianity will fade and would soon disappear." He also said his band was more famous than Jesus Christ.

What do all these folks have in common? They all deny, or in Lennon's case denied, the glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus. They are what the Bible would call "scoffers." Believe you me, if they were convinced that the eternal God who became a man was returning to judge the world according to his righteousness, they would never utter such blasphemous statements. However, besides Lennon, they remained unconvinced. Perhaps they should consult the writings of eyewitnesses to the Transfiguration. There were scoffers in the apostles' day as well, and Peter reminds the church that because of the Transfiguration, we can confidently look forward to that day of our Lord's glorious return.

Beloved, let us consider the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus and how the glory of Jesus and his future return should impact us in the here and now. Here are our points for this morning:

1. The Coming Kingdom (9:1-3)
2. The Conquering Voice (9:4-10)
3. The Cross-examination (9:11-13)

Let's start with the first verse. Throughout church history, there have been many interpretations regarding this passage. I'll present a few and then tell you why I find one interpretation most convincing. Some understand the phrase, "the kingdom of God after it has come with power," referring to the Transfiguration that occurs in the two verses directly after it. In this case, the Transfiguration is a preview of the return of Christ. One difficulty with this understanding is the statement about some who were present not tasting death before the coming of the Kingdom. Some would argue that this implies that some would do so. However, the Transfiguration occurred six days after everyone was still alive.

Others take this phrase to refer to the heavenly glory that was revealed at Christ's return and then seen more fully as the Holy Spirit worked through the church in the book of Acts. Calvin and Luther held to this view. Another view is that Jesus meant the evangelization of the known world. So, as God added to the church members from every nation and tribe, the kingdom was coming into power. A fourth view finds fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Those who hold to this view believe that Jesus' address regarding his return in chapter 13 is referring to a symbolic return in judgment against unbelieving Jews through the destruction of Jerusalem. They would also argue that most of what's written in the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. The last view argues that Jesus refers to his actual return to the earth or his second advent. However, I don't believe this last view is an option because it would suggest that Jesus possessed faulty information regarding his return date. Those within the higher criticism camp hold to this view, which enables them to say that Jesus had it wrong.

I don't want to be dismissive about these views besides the last one because I understand their rationale. But let me share why I believe the first view is correct. Again, I believe "the kingdom of God coming with power" refers to the transfiguration as a proleptic or anticipatory glimpse of the glory of the Son of God in his future coming. First, consider the placement of this phrase. It comes on the heels of Jesus referring to his second coming in verse 38, right before the actual transfiguration in verse 2 of chapter 9. I don't think this is merely a coincidence, but Mark is trying to communicate his point using context. Second, consider the phrase employed in the Matthean parallel passage:

²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." -Matthew 16:28

Matthew provides even more explicit language that Jesus refers to his second coming, not merely his resurrection, the Spirit's work in the church, or evangelizing the known

world. Again, the statement that some will not taste death until this happens prevents us from interpreting this as Jesus' actual second advent. However, if the Transfiguration represents and anticipates Christ's powerful coming, it fits the passage's context as a manifestation of the coming kingdom. Regarding that phrase, "some will not taste death," is meant to focus on the fact that there will be some who will be present for this manifestation, as opposed to implying that some will certainly die before this event.

The most potent and compelling evidence that Jesus is referring to the Transfiguration as a manifestation of his second coming is the commentary provided by Peter on this very verse. Let's consider the words of the apostle.

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. -2 Peter 1:16-18

We'll return to this passage later in the message, but consider what Peter's saying for now. In verse 16, he references the second coming of Jesus. The word we find in verse 16 is a New Testament technical term for the second coming of Christ. He points to the transfiguration as proof that Jesus will return for his people! Therefore, Jesus, in verse 1 of Mark chapter 9, is preparing his people for the transfiguration, which will prepare them for his second coming. Let's reread verses 2-3 to consider the transfiguration itself.

We find a recapitulation of the exodus within these verses, especially if you read down to verse 7. Moses went up on a high mountain, God's glory came down in a cloud, Moses heard God's voice, Moses' skin shone glory, and the people were afraid to come near Moses. All of these elements are present here. The high mountain, God's glory in the cloud, God speaking from the cloud, the shining of glory, and a terrified people. Even the six days seem to be an intentional parallel to Exodus 24:16, when the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai for that time.

However, there's a stunning difference between these two accounts. One was receiving revelation from God on the mountain. Another was God on the mountain. At Sinai, Moses saw the glory of God and even reflected it in his face. Did you know the moon makes no light of its own? This leads many to ask, where does the moon get its light? The moon reflects light from the sun. So what it can't generate on its own is receive from the sun and then is reflected for us all to see. This is a good analogy for the

experience of Moses. Jesus, however, is not like the moon. Jesus is like the sun itself, for he is the source of the glory. He produces the glory. It emanates from him. As the author of Hebrews puts it, Jesus is the “radiance of the glory of God.”

This is God incognito! However, the veil is slightly removed to give the disciples a glimpse of his return. For it is at his return that he consummates his kingdom. As Paul would say,

¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. -1 Corinthians 13:12

It’s like God said, “Let me put in a pen in this transfiguration and pick it back up at the second advent.” And best believe, he’s coming in glory. If you’ve read the end of the story, you know this to be true.

*¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
-Revelation 19:11-16*

This is the Lord Jesus with the veil removed for all peoples to see his majestic rule and reign. What does it look like for those on Earth as he returns to consummate his kingdom? Well, this is a tale of two stories.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life

without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” -Revelation 21:1-8

Some will rejoice, and others will weep at his second coming. Which will you do? I want to phone in a friend and allow the Apostle Peter to help preach this sermon as he comments on the transfiguration passage in the text we read earlier. Let's grab a few points of application from the Apostle. Keep your finger in Mark and turn with me to 2 Peter. First point, church, don't be discouraged by the scoffers. They've always been there. Consider verses 16 of chapter 1 and 5 & 8 of chapter 3.

In Peter's day, they scoffed at the return of the Lord Jesus, not unlike many today. However, we have an eyewitness in the Apostle Peter, who beheld the evidence of Jesus' return, namely the transfiguration. So, we have reason to hold on to our faith in great confidence. People don't choose to be crucified upside down when blatantly lying. There were scoffers in Jeremiah's day.

*¹³ Then I said: “Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’”
-Jeremiah 14:13*

The false prophets found comfort in the fact that Yahweh had not judged Israel for their sin despite the prophets warning them that he would. As a matter of fact, they prospered at certain points in their rebellion. Nevertheless, the day of the Lord did finally come when they were swept up into captivity. So, believer, don't be discouraged by the scoffers; remember the transfiguration as a foretaste and a down payment of the Lord Jesus' final work at his second advent.

A second application point from Peter is this: share the gospel with the lost so that they may repent before the Lord's return. Consider verses 9-10. It reminds me of Gema's preschool program. One would surmise they aren't punctual because they don't start each session on time. However, it is actually a desire for all the kids who are signed up to be able to participate in the activities. It's a tool of grace.

The Lord Jesus is mercifully patient in his return due to his loving stance towards humanity. Therefore, we should take the time we currently have to evangelize the lost. Here's a quick, practical, and hopefully encouraging way to open up doors for evangelism. Our brother John Horn makes it a point to inject the Lord Jesus into the conversations with his unbelieving coworkers. He asked to get off early one day to "meet with his pastor," that conversation evolved into an hour-long dialogue regarding

the gospel. Another time, one of his coworkers used God's name in vain, and he replied, "Wouldn't you rather have God bless it?" Which, again, began a dialogue surrounding the Lord Jesus. So, church, keep your eyes and ears open for this opportunity to bring the Lord Jesus into a conversation because there's only one way unbelievers will believe, and that's if someone preaches. And he's left us to do the preaching. Once he returns, time will have run out.

Final application: Jesus is returning; therefore, read your Bible! This is another application point taken from Peter, but let's transition to our second point in Mark this morning, and we'll find our way back in 2 Peter—the Conquering Voice (9:4-10).

Once again, there are varying views on why Elijah and Moses appeared with Jesus. However, I don't think we're required to believe just one, as many of these views seem to complement one another. The traditional interpretation of their presence is that they represent the two divisions of the OT, the Law and the Prophets. Not everyone agrees on this point, but based on the NT gospel's emphasis on Christ fulfilling the law and prophets, I find this point especially compelling. Here are some other points that I don't believe are mutually exclusive. Both were faithful servants who suffered due to their obedience, and yet there are mysterious circumstances surrounding the deaths of both figures. As you may know, Elijah was taken into heaven and, therefore, didn't experience death. And although Deut. Records Moses' death, later Jewish traditions said that Moses was also translated directly to heaven. In Jude, we read about the archangel Michael disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses. Both Elijah and Moses experienced theophanies on a mountain. And both were great deliverers representing a prophetic tradition that points to the Messiah.

⁴ "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.⁵ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." -Malachi 4:4-6

And although Mark doesn't mention what Jesus discussed with them, Luke gives us a bit more information.

³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. -Luke 9:31

If you recall, last week, we discussed how Mark 8 was a turning point in this gospel. From now on, the Lord Jesus is setting his face towards Jerusalem. In other words, he's headed to Golgotha to take the sins of his people by becoming their sacrifice. So this is

the topic of discussion. I'm willing to bet that Elijah and Moses were blown away as they heard the gospel out of the mouth of the gospel himself!

Peter does what he does best in verse 5: he speaks. However, verse 6 indicates that his words also represent James and John's feelings. Notice that the text says they were terrified. This is a recurring theme we see in the Scriptures. The real sense of being in the presence of God is often not stupor and delight but holy awe and even terror. Remember a few weeks ago, we read Revelation 1, where John fell as though dead before the risen and glorified Savior. When humanity is in the presence of God, our weakness and sin stand in sharp contrast to the holiness and omnipotence of God! And that's where we find these three Apostles.

Peter suggests building a booth to honor these three individuals. By making such a suggestion, Peter fails to recognize the uniqueness of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Christ's superiority over Moses and Elijah is made clear by the fact that all of the Law and Prophets point to him! They find their fulfillment and completion within him.

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. -Luke 24:27

And verse 7 and 8 is a clear enough rebuke from God the Father. Here's the second time we hear the voice of the Father in this gospel. The Father tells these disciples, "Don't miss the uniqueness of what's currently taking place with my son." Here's how the author of Hebrews puts it,

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. -Hebrews 1:1-2

This brings us back to our former application: in light of Christ's uniqueness and his glorious return, read your Bible! But don't just read it. Read the Word with Christo-centric lenses, even the Old Testament. I think that's one of the points the Father is making here. Listen to the Word incarnate, for he has words of life. And Peter picks up on this point in his second epistle. Let's go back there one last time and consider verse 19.

So, in the context of the transfiguration, Peter, too, is telling this church to listen to the Word! Or to read the Word. Clearly, God the Father wasn't repudiating the law and prophets. Instead, he highlighted His Son's unique position and mission, and I believe he directed the disciples to understand the law and prophets in light of His Son. In other

words, don't just read the Old Testament the way the unbelieving Jews do. Read the Old Testament in light of the one you have in front of you! And I think that's Peter's point to his audience as well. The Old Testament is a means to an end, that end being Jesus! And I pray the time we take to consider Biblical Theology in our gatherings will aid your journey through the Old Testament.

Here's a very practical application. Next year, I'd like our church to engage in a yearlong Bible reading plan. There are several benefits of going through the entire bible in one year.

1. It takes you places you usually wouldn't go.
2. You gain access to the full wisdom and council of God's Word.
3. It helps to avoid reading the Bible as a self-help manual.
4. You get to see the big picture of redemptive history.
5. It creates a healthy habit and discipline of daily Bible reading.
6. It is a catalyst for member-on-member discipleship.

Don't wait until January to read your Bible. However, remember the transfiguration. Remember the return of Jesus. Remember the uniqueness of Christ and that all of Scripture points to him, and allow these truths to compel you to read all of Scripture alongside the covenant members of Calvary Baptist Church next year. I'll give constant reminders of this in December.

Let's transition to our last point this morning—the Cross-examination. In these final verses, the disciples ask Jesus a question. Let's reread verses 11-13. Once again, he charges them to tell no one until his resurrection. Presumably, this includes the other disciples. But he certainly wouldn't want the masses hearing of this, considering their understanding of a Messiah and Rome's possible reaction before his hour comes. But once again, the talk of his resurrection goes right over their heads. So, they proceed to ask him a question.

Last week, we touched on the fact that many Jews in Jesus' day took the Malachi passage literally, that Elijah would rise from the dead as a forerunner before the Messianic age. The disciples here are probably thinking, "We know that Elijah will return before the great day of the Lord. We just saw Elijah up there. So isn't the day near? Why are you talking about death and resurrections still? Let's talk about the restoration of all things instead!"

Still not understanding that there is no restoration apart from a death and resurrection. Jesus explains to them that John the Baptist fulfilled what was spoken of Elijah in the Old Testament. His life was a forerunning of the Messiah, as he was falsely condemned

by a political leader within the Roman Empire, just as Christ will one day be. Beloved, we continue our trek to Jerusalem, where our ransom was paid on our behalf. Next week, we'll continue to consider Jesus' ministry toward the cross.

Let's pray.