

Follow: A Foretaste of Glory

Mark 9:1-13

If you've been to a movie recently you know that the start time they give you isn't the start time for the movie you paid to see. Around the start time they give you, you will begin to see previews of movies that will be released soon. The previews are around 2 minutes long and they give you little snippets of the movie to wet your appetite and hopefully get you back in the theatre to watch another movie.

I actually like to watch movie previews. They are like appetizers.

Today, in our study of Mark, we have come to the Transfiguration and I want you to think of this story as a preview or an appetizer of what is to come for Jesus and for His disciples. At the end of Mark 8 we saw Jesus predict that the means to his exaltation as Messiah and King will be the path of suffering, rejection, and death. We also learned that this pattern of suffering must hold true for those who would follow Him as disciples. They must deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him.

As Jesus begins teaching about his suffering the disciples are confused and unsure. There's no parking space for this car. The Messiah is supposed to be the fulfillment of the kingly promises in the OT. He is to reign in glory and splendor but he is talking about suffering and death for himself and his followers.

Immediately following that we get these words in 9:1. What this basically boils down to is a preview of what the King reigning in His kingdom will look like. Jesus tells them that some of them will get a taste of this reality.

So, what we have here is a divine assurance to the disciples that Jesus is what Peter proclaimed him to be, Messiah, and he is also the suffering servant. The transfiguration is a foretaste of the glory that will come through the work Jesus accomplishes. It's like God the Father pulls back the curtain for these disciples and lets them see the majesty and splendor of the Son of God that has been veiled by His human form.

Now, what's interesting about movie previews is that if you search for previews online you will often find people who dissect every detail of those previews to try to figure out the plot of the movie. This is especially true of highly anticipated movies in a series like Star Wars. You and I need to read and study this story with

an eye to what God is telling us about Jesus so we can know our Savior better through this preview. So, today we are going to study **5 revelations that give a foretaste of the future glory of Jesus and shape our discipleship.** You can put the words “Jesus is” before each of these.

- **The Glorious Son of Man (vv. 2-3)**

Look at how verse 2 connects the coming story of the transfiguration to the prediction Jesus has just made in verse 1. He only takes 3 disciples with Him, these are the “some” of verse 1 and they go up on a high mountain.

The end of verse 2 very succinctly tells us what happened. This word transfigured means to change forms. Now, I want you to think of this in terms of Phil. 2:5-7. It’s the same root word “form” used in Mark. The heavenly splendor of Jesus was veiled while he took the form of a human being. Here, the transfiguration means that these disciples got a glimpse of his heavenly form. Mark explains further in verse 3.

The emphasis is that his appearance and his clothing change and are white. Mark makes it clear that this wasn’t the result of some earthly technique. In Scripture we see this sort of white radiance displayed by heavenly beings. In Daniel 7 we read of God the Father being clothed in white.

What does this tell us about Jesus? He is not simply a prophet or another man. He is the pre-existent, heavenly Son of Man. He is unique. He is sent by the Father into the world to accomplish the work of the Father and here the disciples get a preview of the glory He had before the incarnation and the glory He will have in the future. What else do we learn? Let’s look at our 2nd revelation.

- **The One who Brings the Day of the Lord (v. 4)**

After describing the appearance of Jesus, some special visitors show up in verse 4. This is clearly significant because they are two of the most revered, most important OT figures.

But beyond just being important OT figures in the story of the Bible, the fact that these two appear and talk with Jesus tells us several truths about Jesus.

First, this whole story takes place on a high mountain, as we saw in verse 2. Mountains in Scripture tend to be places where God reveals Himself to man. Both

Moses and Elijah met God on Mt. Sinai and they were the only two to meet God on Sinai. Moses saw the revelation of God and spoke with God there and Elijah also had God speak with Him there. Rather than speaking to God the Father, Moses and Elijah are speaking directly with Jesus on this mountain. What does that tell us about who Jesus is?

Second, in the OT there's only one passage that mentions both Moses and Elijah and it's found in the very last words of the OT in Malachi 4. Malachi is written after Israel's return from exile. So, the people are back in the land, but things are still not going well. So, God, through Malachi exhorts the people that judgment will come to them. In the OT that judgment is called the "day of the Lord" and is repeatedly described as an eschatological moment when God shows up to judge the wicked and usher in his glorious kingdom. Let's start reading in Malachi 4:1-3.

After those promises, we get an exhortation for Israel to remember the law of Moses in verse 4 and to expect a coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord.

So, the fact that these two figures show up to talk with Jesus indicates that the day of the Lord is upon Israel and through Jesus a new, messianic age has arrived. Let's move on to our 3rd revelation of Jesus.

- **The Divine Conquering Son of God (vv. 5-7)**

The story of the Transfiguration is found in both Matthew and Luke as well, but Mark's version has a unique emphasis on the disciples. If you look back at the first few verses it tells the story from their point of view. This is important because it's a story meant to challenge and encourage them and it drives home the point that our walk of discipleship is clearly shaped by who Jesus is.

But up through verse 4 the disciples have been watching these events unfold. Now in verse 5 they respond. And it's a bit awkward. Why does Peter suggest that they build 3 tabernacles in response to this? Many different theories have been put forward, but the text tells us in verse 6. He literally didn't know how to respond or what to say. He knew this was important, but didn't know why.

No one responds to Peter's words and Mark picks right back up with the heavenly scene unfolding around the disciples. Look at verse 7. If you remember when Moses went onto Mt. Sinai a cloud enveloped the mountain, showing that the presence of God was there. Listen to Exodus 24:15-16. The cloud lets us know

that the glory of the Lord was present on this mountain. But that's not the most important piece of this. Notice what God the Father says in verse 7.

We've heard these words before in Mark 1:11 at the baptism of Jesus. At Jesus' baptism they were spoken only to Jesus. Here they are spoken directly to the disciples. What is the significance of God the Father calling Jesus His Son?

Well, we've already talked about the heavenly origin of Jesus, but this statement is most likely a reference back to Psalm 2. In this Psalm we see the nations and their rulers rebelling against God's authority. Notice God's response to their rebellion in verses 4-6. His plan to bring about His kingdom is to install his king and notice the identity of that King in verse 7.

This word from God the Father affirms the title of Messiah or anointed one that Peter gave in 8:29. But this isn't all God says and this is our 4th revelation.

- **The Final Word of God (vv. 7-8)**

Since Jesus is God's Son, how must the disciples respond to Him? Look at the command at the end of verse 7. They must listen to Him.

Of course, we've just seen Moses, one of the great leaders of Israel present with Jesus. Moses was certainly the greatest spokesman for God in the OT. He wrote down the 5 books of the law that form the foundation for the story of Israel in the entire OT.

Now we have God the Father telling the disciples to listen to Jesus. Why? Did you know that in the book of Deuteronomy there's the promise that God would raise up a prophet greater than Moses and that the people of Israel must listen to that prophet? Listen to Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.

Jesus is the final Word of God, the long expected spokesman who reveals God to His people? Listen to John 1:18 & Hebrews 1:1-3.

But beyond being this promised prophet, God the Father tells the disciples to listen to Jesus immediately following the hard words he gave them in 8:27-38 concerning his suffering and their hardship as disciples. They must pay careful attention to this because without it, they will not grasp who Jesus is nor participate in His kingdom. And that brings us to our last revelation of Jesus.

- **The Promised Suffering Servant (vv. 9-13)**

This has been a crazy week or so for the disciples. They have heard Jesus tell them he will suffer and die, then they have seen him in his glory standing and talking with Moses and Elijah in a preview of the coming kingdom. There may have been a temptation to dismiss the talk of a suffering Messiah in favor of a triumphalism that the kingdom could come now through a conquering Messiah.

That's why Jesus tells them what he does in verse 9. And they definitely aren't getting it. Look at verse 10. They were good Jews and teaching concerning the resurrection was quite common during this time. So, they aren't struggling with the concept of a resurrection. It seems they are struggling with the concept of Jesus' death. You only rise from the dead after dying and they haven't quite bought into this whole suffering Messiah yet. So, they ask Jesus a question in verse 11.

What exactly are they asking? Well, they have just seen Moses and Elijah and we talked earlier about how these two went together for Jews in eschatological terms. When people thought about Elijah showing up, they thought about the ushering in of God's kingdom. So, the disciples ask this question because they assume the day of the Lord is well on the way and they are wondering how a suffering Messiah fits into this coming kingdom. If Elijah has already showed up, why would you need to die?

Jesus answers in verse 12. The disciples are right to believe that Elijah's coming first will begin the restoration of all things. This matches the expectation of Malachi 4:4-6 that we saw earlier. But Jesus challenges their thinking with this question in verses 12-13.

Notice how twice in these two verses Jesus makes the suffering Messiah dependent on what is written in the OT. The Messiah must die to usher in the kingdom because it is necessary according to the OT Scriptures.

The question is, what OT Scriptures predict the suffering of Messiah and the suffering of the Elijah who would precede him? Well, the Elijah who would come before the Messiah is, of course, John the Baptist. This is made clear in Matthew's gospel and Jesus here is referring to the account of his death in Mark 6. Where does the OT predict that? Well, the OT figure of Elijah was certainly rejected and

suffered great persecution during his ministry. He sets the type or pattern for all who would speak God's Word after him.

What about the suffering of Messiah? The most obvious passage where "it is written that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt" is Isaiah 53:3-6. Listen to those words. I think that is who Jesus is identifying himself as. He's the suffering servant and in order to be exalted in glory, he must suffer and die.

So, here we have 5 revelations of Jesus Christ. These are like 5 facets of a diamond that shine with the glory of Christ. But what does the clear picture of Jesus mean for us? We must be in the habit of pondering the glory of Jesus because this is what changes us. 2 Cor. 3:18. But also listen to this quote describing the process of change in us:

"The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love: he who loveth mean and sordid things doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit unto a conformity with the perfections which it loves." - Henry Scougal

We talk about loving Christ and we want to love Christ more than earthly things. The only way to love Christ is to dwell on the beauty of His person and work.

Growing in love through beholding the beauty of Christ is what steadies us for the difficulties of life. Life is hard. People sin against us and we sin against people. I know there are those suffering greatly in our church body even this morning. Biblically speaking, perhaps the greatest way to learn to respond appropriately to trials is to behold the glory of Jesus in His suffering. We are changed as we realize the perfect, glorious, heavenly Son of God, described in this passage took the form of a man and suffered at the hands of sinful men.

There's no simple words to put together to make suffering go away or become easier. It takes a soul that has soaked in the beauty and glory of a suffering Messiah.

That is why we direct our thoughts this morning to Jesus. And I pray that is where I pray they will remain this coming week. Let's pray.