

The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-13

Jesus just rejected Peter's demonic insistence on glory without death. He will suffer, be rejected and die, and so he prepares for his journey to the cross by taking Peter, James and John up a high mountain (v2). Mark has shown us the humanity of Jesus—his sorrow, fatigue and frustration—as well as glimpses of his divinity, but here we see the radiant glory of God in Jesus. Like at his baptism, a cloud is present and the Father declares his love for the Son (1:11; v7). This is how the Father responds to what Jesus has done and committed himself to doing. He shows honor and glory. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets, so here Moses and Elijah show up to encourage him on the way.

Restrained Glory

This is not a random display of glory like a flashing magic trick. God has been revealing himself in glorious light since the beginning (Gen. 1:3). J.I. Packer says the glory of God is associated with “weight, worth, wealth, splendor, and dignity, all of which are present when God is said to have revealed his glory.” The Hebrew word *kavod* means glory and heaviness, weightiness, and the Shekinah is God's dwelling or presence. His glory cloud leads Israel in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Ex. 13:21). Incidentally, this is why we love and fear fire. When the tabernacle is finished being built, the glory of the Lord fills it and no one can enter (Ex. 40:34ff.). A similar thing happens in the temple in 2 Chronicles 7 after Solomon finishes building it. Fire drops from heaven, consumes the ascension offering, and the glory of God fills the temple: “And the priests could not enter the house of Yahweh, because the glory of Yahweh filled Yahweh's house” (7:2). It's not that God was so far away or didn't want to be near his people in the Old Covenant. He did, but didn't want to consume them. Moses asked God, “Please, show me your glory”, and God responded, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Ex. 33:18, 20). So God put Moses in the cleft of the rock and covered him with his hand as he passed by, letting Moses only see his back (vv21-23). And when Moses came down, the people were terrified to come near him because of his shining face (Ex. 34:30). When people are wicked like Eli's sons and come near the glory of God, the glory either departs (*ichabod*) or consumes (1 Sam. 2:12-17 22; 4:10-11, 19-22).

The Glory of God in Jesus

If Israel had a hard time looking at Moses, imagine the restraint Jesus exercised. Still, if the physical manifestation of his glory is muted, the effect is not. Jesus doesn't reflect the glory of God; he *is* that glory: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb. 1:3). Jesus will fulfill the law and prophets, and like Moses and Elijah he meets God up on the mountain (Matt. 5:17; Ex. 31:18; 1 Kgs. 19:8). The disciples are terrified, so Peter fills the void, saying this is a good thing, let's stay and I'll build tents (vv5-6). The glory of God isn't comfortable! Nor is it something we can box in and control.

Transformed from Glory to Glory

In both cloud appearances the Father expresses his love for his Son (1:11; 9:7). At the baptism he said Jesus pleased him, and here he says “Hear him!” We shouldn't be like Peter and want a mountaintop experience to endure. This is a big lesson for Peter, one he remembers and gives away: “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. . . . 19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (1 Pet. 1:17-19). The word we have is *more* sure. We hear Christ, behold his glory, and are thereby transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:16-18).

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Mark 9:2-13 *2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 12 And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."*

1. What happens to Jesus when he up on the mountain (verses 2-3)? Do you know the big word for this that starts with the letter t?
2. A big cloud overshadowed them on the mountain. Can you think of other times in Bible that clouds appear?
3. What does the Father tell Peter, James, and John to do (verse 7)? How do you do this?
4. Draw a picture of Jesus talking to Moses and Elijah on the top of the mountain with a wonderful cloud above them, while Peter, James and John look a little scared.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

*And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud,
"This is my beloved Son; listen to him." --Mark 9:7*