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Sermon 30

Mark 9:1-13

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Have you guys ever had a mountaintop experience? Do you know what I’m talking about? Whether it was like a retreat weekend, or whether it was a week at camp, or maybe it was a vacation, or a place you went to and you were like, “This is paradise. I could stay here for the rest of my life and it would be awesome.” Whether it was with my friends, or my favorite people, or whatever, but reality sets in and you’re like, “I have to return to normal. I’ve got to go back. I have to go back down in the valley where life happens. I can’t stay up on the mountain.” Right? We’re going to see something like that, tonight, in our passage in Mark 9, where these disciples have to snap out of this mountaintop experience and head back into the valley, where we all live.

If I had to title this message, I would say that this is *Jesus’ Transfiguration: The Christ is the Son of God.* We’re only going to look at the first 13 verses tonight. I’m glad that it’s only 5:20, because we’re going to read a lot of Scripture tonight. It’s going to be awesome. There is going to be a lot of Scripture because the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible, and we’re going to see how this points us to who Jesus is and why we need to listen to Him. The reason that this passage is where it is, is because it’s coming on the heels of Peter’s confession of Jesus being the Christ, and Jesus declaring, “Yes, you’re right. The Father revealed that to you. It didn’t just pop into your head. And the Messiah, the Christ, who you’ve been expecting – He’s going to suffer, He’s going to be rejected, He’s going to die.” And they weren’t expecting that. He’s going to rise again. Jesus is telling them this. And then, you know how Peter gets rebuked, but Jesus also says this, and this is super important, in the context of this passage. Where the Transfiguration falls is important, because in all of the Synoptics it’s around where Jesus says, “If you want to be my disciple, you have to deny yourself, you have to take up your cross, and you have to follow me.” So, we’re going to see that there is suffering in discipleship.

Before we read the passage together, tonight, I want to pray, and then we’ll dive in.

*Father, we praise you for this evening. We praise you for being able to sing songs about Jesus; that there is no one beside you, there is no one above you, there is no one like you. Jesus, you alone are God and we exalt you. And we ask, right now, Holy Spirit, for you to speak to us, that you would teach us, that you would illuminate your Scriptures for us, that we might see Jesus as never before; that we would listen to Jesus, and that we would be diligent to follow and share Jesus with others. It’s in Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

God’s Word, starting in Mark 9:1.

*And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”*

*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.”*

So, there’s a lot in this passage. I’m going to be talking really fast, and covering a lot of material, but there’s going to be a lot of slides. So, you can just jot down the passage, because if you try to flip and turn, you’re probably going to get lost. There are going to be three main sections we’re going to cover. The first six verses are going to be talking about the light of Jesus. Then, in verses 7-8 we’re going to be talking about listening to Jesus. And then, in the final verses, 9-13, we’re going to be looking for Jesus.

In the first verse, we need to really tackle this one, because it falls on the heels of what Rob preached last week. It’s a pretty debated statement that Jesus says, that some of the disciples who were there right then “won’t taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power.” What in the world did Jesus mean by that statement? I did a lot of research in this, and mainly there are three opinions, or three options, if you will. The first option would be that He was talking about the Transfiguration, which was about to happen in six days. In about a week, there’s going to be the Transfiguration, and they were going to see the glory of God. They’re going to see Jesus in power. The second option would have been the resurrection and the ascension. That’s pretty glorious, pretty powerful, overcoming death and going back to the Father. The third option would be Pentecost and the expansion of the Early Church. Now, all of those options are pretty good. We don’t know exactly which one it was. Personally, I like option three, which would be Pentecost and the spread of the Gospel in the Early Church. The reason I like option three is because of that word “power.” Look at that word in verse 1. “Power.” After the resurrection, in Acts 1, this is what it says.

*6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

There are similar words in that passage as what we’ve been walking through recently, in Mark. The disciples are focusing in that passage on the restoration of Israel, still. And Jesus is trying to refocus them, still, even post-resurrection, that the mission of God is for all nations. Then, you have the reference to the cloud, and the relevance for that passage, tonight, and we’re going to see the cloud, and we’re going to talk about that. Then, Jesus said, “Some will not taste death until they see the kingdom come with power.” I think verse 8 in Acts 1 is the key. Jesus said they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them, and they did. If you continue reading in Acts 2, that’s when the Holy Spirit came on them on the Day of Pentecost, when they spoke the Gospel with boldness, when they declared the kingdom of God, and they preached with power. It says in Acts 2:41,

*41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

I don’t really know what else could be more powerful than the kingdom of God spreading like that, and clearly it was God moving, because Peter was preaching. And we see Peter put his foot in his mouth again, tonight. So, we know it was God moving.

And as I was studying this, I ran across this quote, from R. T. France. He says this,

“Jesus may not be referring to a single event but to a series of events – Jesus’ transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension, Pentecost, and the destruction of the temple. As one sees the seed develop into a stalk, head, and full kernel, some of Jesus’ disciples will see the fulfillment of his prediction in stages.

So, maybe it’s not options 1, 2, or 3. Maybe it’s all three. So, whatever Jesus meant in verse 1, we do know this, that the kingdom of God was coming, and it was coming in power.

We’re going to pick up in Mark 9:2. It says,

*Six days later, Jesus took with Him, Peter, James, and John.*

So, Jesus took His three closest disciples. This is Jesus’ inner circle. If you remember our map we’ve been looking at, it’s going to be on the screen.

A map of the bible

Description automatically generatedThe very top portion, top right, it says, “Possible site for Jesus’ Transfiguration.” That is Mount Hermon. This is in Caesarea Philippi. And out of the 12 disciples, Jesus only has His three closest buddies with Him. Right? Why? Well, He needed three witnesses. That was super important. Three testimonies about what is about to happen.

There’s a theme throughout the Bible for when God reveals His glory, and it happens on top of a mountain. So, Jesus and His three closest disciples go on a hike, up on a high mountain, and it says in verse 2,

*And he was transfigured before them,*

That word ‘transfigured,’ in the Greek, is ‘metamorphoō,’ which means ‘to transform,’ and it’s used only four times in the New Testament. It’s used here in Mark, and it’s used in Matthew 17:2, in the parallel account,

*And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.*

It’s used in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which we read tonight, as a body together,

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,  are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

And then Paul writes, again, in Romans 12:2,

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, …*

So, in those last two passages, 2 Corinthians and Romans 12, he’s talking about how disciples of Jesus today are changed from the inside out. That’s word ‘metamorphoō’ is a radical altering, and your life is completely different. There’s a complete transformation.

So, what Peter, and James, and John witnessed in Jesus was His divine glory shining through His human flesh. It was as if there was a veil, and Jesus pulled the veil back, and you see the glory of Jesus. They get a little peek behind the humanity of Christ, to see His divinity. So, not only is Jesus the Christ, which they do know now, and not only is He the Messiah,He’s also the eternal Son of God. In John 1, it says,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

Talking about John the Baptist.

*7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

So, they are seeing Jesus, the Light of the World, without a veil right now. They were completely blinded. Jesus is the light, and Peter, James, and John are getting this sneak peek at Jesus’ divinity.

In Colossians 2:9, it says,

*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*

So, Jesus is divinity clothed in humanity. Hebrews 1:3,

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

This Messiah is deity dressed in a body. The Light of the World wrapped in flesh. Not only was Jesus’ countenance changed, but His clothes were changed. They went from rugged to radiant, intensely white. Luke 9:29 says they were “dazzling white.” Matthew 17:2 says they were “white as light.” Mark adds, in Matk 9:3, “no one on Earth could bleach them” this white. This is out of this world.

If you talk about what white symbolizes, it’s symbolizes purity, wholeness, and holiness. This is God in all of His holiness. Jesus was not holding anything back from Peter, James, and John to see here. This is shocking. But it’s not the only thing that shocked Peter, James, and John in the moment. Look at verse 4. It says,

*…there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.*

That would have been pretty shocking, because they were not supposed to be there, and they were not supposed to see Jesus as He was. But a lot of new things were happening here, so here we go. So, Elijah and Moses, two massive, Old Testament characters, who had already passed away from this world a long time ago, here they are talking with Jesus. Could this be communicating to us that death is not the end? That there is existence after death for us all? Elijah is representative of the prophets who proclaimed God’s glory. Elijah saw God’s glory on Mount Carmel; you can read about that in 1 Kings 18. We don’t have time to do that tonight. Moses is representative of the Law. He received the Law from God, and he got to see the back side of God on the mountain, and he beheld God’s glory at Mt. Sinai. Jesus is talking with these two guys, and He is – what we learned through Hebrews – He is the better fulfillment of both all of the Law and the Prophets. If you need to go back and listen, go back and listen to one of the sermons from Hebrews 12, when we were wrapping up that series. It talks about how, when we walked through that book for a whole year, about the glory of Jesus. How Jesus is better, Jesus is better, Jesus is better.

In the NIV Commentary, it says this,

Elijah and Moses are both eschatological figures (end time figures). Moses was Israel’s first deliverer, and people expected a prophet like Moses to appear and liberate Israel. Elijah was supposed to appear at the dawning of the end time and God’s ultimate redemption of Israel.

So, we’re going to talk about that at the very end. There is a prophecy in the Old Testament, the last book of the Old Testament, involving Elijah, that we’re going to talk about at the end of our passage tonight. But here, in Mark 9:4, it says that Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus. What in the world were they talking about? Wouldn’t you want to be privy to that conversation, and listen in like a fly on the wall? Luke 9:31 tells us. It says about Elijah and Moses,

*…who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Interesting, that word ‘departure’ means ‘exodus.’ So, they were talking about Jesus’ exodus. Jesus was about to accomplish something greater than Moses had ever thought about accomplishing. Moses was used by God to deliver God’s people out of slavery in Egypt, out of oppression from the Egyptians. Jesus is about to deliver God’s people out of slavery to sin and death, a much greater exodus. They were talking about Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, which is about to happen in Jerusalem, and Jesus is about to accomplish this. Something that Elijah had never seen, Moses had never seen, but they’re excited about it, and they know what’s up, even if Peter, James, and John don’t.

So, how would Peter, James, and John respond? Look at verses 5-6.

*And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,”…*

I think his voice was shaking, maybe like “*Ra-bbbo-nii.”*

*“Rabbi, it is good that we are here.”*

Thank you, Captain Obvious.

*“Let us make three tents,…”*

“Can we put up three booths, maybe three tabernacles. Let’s build three cabins. Can we just hang out here? Can we stay here? One for you, one for Elijah, one for Moses? We can have this mountaintop experience for the rest of our lives. People could come up, we could visit, maybe have a little retreat, and maybe we could venerate this site for people to come and see.” We really don’t know what Peter was thinking, what was going through his head. We do know, because of Mathew, Mark, and Luke, that he said, “Lord! Rabbi! Master!” He’s terrified. He’s scared. He doesn’t know what to say. But we do know that he still has some man-centered thinking going on. There’s some human wisdom here, right? Because he’s not thinking about what Jesus said *must* happen, and it can’t happen on top of this mountain. By the way, Mount Hermon is over 9,000 feet above sea level, so way higher than any of he mountains around us, right now. So, they hiked a pretty good bit. Peter had forgotten from earlier in the week that the Son of Man *must* suffer, and that’s not going to happen on top of Mount Hermon. The cross was coming and Jesus was not going to hang out on top of the mountain, or else it wouldn’t happen.

In The Christ-Centered Commentary, it says this,

We will never understand the person and work of Christ apart from the cross and resurrection. Leave them out, and He is at best a moralist and at worst a self-destructive fool. Leave out the cross, and there is no atonement. Leave out the resurrection, and there is no victory over sin. In sinful weakness we would avoid the cross, stay on the mountain, and make ourselves comfortable. In contrast Jesus will embrace the cross, ascend Calvary’s hill, and drink the cup of suffering filled with the wrath of God.

Verse 6 is where we get the brutally honest truth about Peter. I’m glad Mark put this in there. It says that Peter didn’t know what to say. And maybe you’ve been there. At first, I was thinking, if you don’t know what to say, just shut your mouth. Don’t say anything at all. That’s smarter. But then, I thought, how many times have I opened my mouth and put my foot in it? A lot. Right? How many times have I been scared and not known what to say, but fumbled over my words? Thankfully, all the times I’ve done that are not written in the Bible. But, I think we can cut Saint Peter some slack here, because he’s petrified.

That word ‘terrified,’ at the end of verse 6, means ‘exceedingly frightened.’ The KJV says, “sore afraid.” It basically means they were scared out of their minds. They didn’t know what to think, or know, or do, or say. The only other time that word, ‘terrified,’ is used in the New Testament, is in Hebrews 12:21, where it says,

*Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”*

Moses was talking about the glory of God appearing in a cloud and the blazing smoke on Mt. Sinai. So, it’s hard for us to comprehend all that Peter, James, and John are experiencing, right now. They are seeing the glory, the majesty, the beauty, the holiness, the light of God in Jesus, and it’s clear that we humans should tremble, and shut our mouths, and listen, just like the next two verses say. Look at verses 7-8.

*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.*

In the Scriptures, clouds represent the presence of God. The voice that came out of the cloud spoke while Peter was still fumbling with his words. The Father interrupts. This is the voice of the Alpha and the Omega, Father God, the Almighty. And what is He trying to tell Peter, James, and John? “Listen to Jesus! Listen to my Son!”

Sometimes it’s hard to interpret the Scriptures; sometimes it’s not. That’s the takeaway. “Listen to Jesus. Listen to all that Jesus teaches.” But specifically, in this context, in Matthew 8 and 9, what do we need to listen to? We need to listen to what Jesus is talking about when it comes to His suffering, His rejection, His death, His burial, and His resurrection. The Father is saying, “Listen to Jesus.” And isn’t it ironic that this is a command from the Father, and that His command isn’t, “Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus, right now! Isn’t your mind blown!? Look at His majesty. Look at His light. Look at His beauty. Look at His purity. Look at His holiness.” No, He doesn’t say, “Look at Jesus.” He says, “Listen to Jesus!” The gospel writers put so much emphasis on the sights that are in this scene, the Transfiguration, but the Father says, “Listen…listen.”

To be a follower of Jesus, we have to listen to Jesus. We have to heed His Word. If you want to be a child of God, then you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. Basically, the message is pretty clear. Discipleship involves suffering, denial, and death. Without these, there is no true life. There is no glorification. They always come, as we learned last week, before glorification. It’s safe to say that Peter, James, and John would never forget this experience. We know that to be true, because later Peter would write, in 2 Peter 1,

*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.”*

This is what he’s talking about. This is the Transfiguration. This experience, right here, was awesome, unparalleled. This vision was blinding, unforgettable. This was a mountaintop experience for Peter, James, and John. But God the Father didn’t want them to focus on that experience. He wanted them to focus on Jesus, the Word of God. Listen to Jesus’ words, because He’s the only one left. He’s the one who is most important. Peter even knew not to put stock in his own mountaintop experience. He knew to put all of his faith in the Word. In the very next verse, 2 Peter 1:19, it says,

*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.*

So, here’s the point. True discipleship is not based upon your experiences or visions, but on the inspired, unchanging Word of God. It’s based upon God’s Word, not our experiences. The light of Jesus is shining, as we read His Word, and we would do well to listen to Him.

Now, the end of verse 8 is communicating something extremely important, as well. It says,

*And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*

Jesus only. Jesus alone. We should see that Jesus and only Jesus, alone, is who we need to listen to and look to. In his commentary, Mark Strauss says this about the sudden disappearance of Elijah and Moses. He says,

1. It confirms the miraculous nature of the event.
2. It confirms the preeminence of Jesus.
3. The prior revelation by Moses and Elijah is being superseded by the new revelation given through Jesus. It is to him they must listen.

He’s more important. So, Jesus gives them some final charges and instructions, as they are coming down from this holy mountaintop experience. In verses 9-10, as they are coming down the mountain, He says,

*9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen,…*

Really, Jesus?! Really? We can’t tell anybody what we just saw, what we just heard?” I guess, at least, they could talk amongst themselves. Let all the other dudes go to sleep and be like, “Can you believe that happened? What in the world? Did you see Elij…..?” I don’t know. How did they know it was Elijah and Moses? I don’t really know. Did they have nametags? I don’t know. But, I think it’s fascinating that Jesus tells them they can’t say anything. Then, He gives a caveat,

*“…until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”*

Many times, throughout Mark, we’ve heard Jesus say, “Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet. Don’t tell people I’m the Christ. Don’t tell people I’m the Messiah.” But now, He says,

*“…until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”*

Well, He didn’t want them to mess up the mission. That’s why He’s told them to be quiet. But, can you imagine how dificult it would have been to not tell anybody what they had just witnessed? Let’s be honest, we can’t even go on vacation, or go on a weekend, without taking pictures, or telling people when we get home. We post it on social media. We tell people about our experiences on vacation. These guys went on a mountaintop retreat with Jesus, and they can’t tell anybody. They were probably exploding on the inside. It’s crazy.

But notice that Jesus, once again, foretells of His resurrection. We heard Rob’s incredible message. If you haven’t listened to it, go back and listen to it. At the end of chapter 8, the Son of Man will rise from the grave. The resurrection is crucial. Everything hinges on the resurrection, when it comes to Christianity. And the disciples still didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about. We know, because they asked the question. They had seen resurrections before. They saw Jesus bring Lazarus back from the dead. Remember, Jesus only brought three people in when He raised the little girl from the dead. Peter, James, and John. And He grabbed the little girl by the hand and said, “Talitha cumi. Get up, little girl. Arise.” They say these resurrections happened right in front of them, so they knew what a resurrection was, but what makes what Jesus said curious is that there’s a difference between those people who Jesus raised back from the dead, and Jesus’ resurrection. Because those people, who got raised from the dead, are going to die again. But Jesus is never going to die again.

Jesus’ resurrection changes everything. He’s alive today. His resurrection gives us victory over sin and death. His resurrection sets us free from slavery to sin, slavery to the grave, because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Do you believe that?

Peter, James, and John have some clarifying questions for Jesus, as they are walking down the mountain. They’re like, “Okay, we know you’re the Messiah, we know you’re the Son of God, we just saw all of this, but wait a second.” Theer little Jewish brains are going crazy. Look at verse 11,

*And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?”*

What they are talking about is in Malachi 4. If you go to Matthew and then flip back, this is the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi 4:5-6,

*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.*

The disciples are pretty curious about this prophecy about Elijah. “Jesus, when is this going to come to pass? When is this prophecy about Elijah going to come to pass?” And Jesus is like, “Why don’t you pay attention to the prophecy about the Son of Man? Why are you skipping over the suffering of the Son of Man?” They were rightly confused, but Jesus provides clarity in His answer. He says,

*And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man…”*

Do you see Him redirecting their focus?

*“… 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.”*

Jesus is basically saying, “Don’t worry about Elijah. Don’t worry about that prophecy. You should be focusing on me. You should be focusing on the Son of Man.” Jesus points them to John the Baptist, who came in the Spirit and the power of Elijah. And He says, “What they did to him, they’re going to do to me.” We know that John the Baptist was beheaded. In Matthew 11, Jesus says this,

*“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he… 13 For all the Prophets and the Law …*

Elijah and Moses.

*“…prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.”*

In his commentary on Matthew, David Platt says this,

The promised Elijah, John the Baptist, did in fact have a ministry of restoration. He announced that the kingdom of heaven was near and he called people to repent. However, in the end, John the Baptist’s ministry of restoration resulted in his suffering and death. John’s death is what Jesus referred to when He said, “They did whatever they pleased to him.”

They also were going to do whatever they pleased to Jesus, and He was going to let them do it. The disciples still didn’t grasp the ways of God are not the same as the ways of man. Think about it, the kingdom of God, the ways of God, are so contrary to human ways. Suffering comes before splendor. We all, in our flesh, naturally want splendor. We don’t want suffering; we pray suffering away. God brings suffering to make us more like Jesus. They didn’t understand that it was necessary for Jesus to absorb the wrath of God, the curse, before receiving the crown. The disciples didn’t like it, but Jesus knew that there was going to be a cross before there was going to be a coronation.

*The NIV Commentary,* once again, was very helpful explaining this scene. And when it comes to Mark’s first century audience, what were they thinking about this scene:

1. It serves to debunk any false hopes of eschatological triumphalism. His readers should not expect to reign as kings anytime soon.
2. It offers comfort and hope of ultimate vindication. In spite of terrible suffering, they will be glorified with Jesus at his return.

Isn’t it fascinating that they were going – Jesus was like, “This is super encouraging. They get to see Jesus in all of His glory.” And Jesus is going to say, “Hey, I’m going to come back from the dead! This is going to happen! But before all of that, I’m going to suffer, and you’re going to suffer, too. And if you want to follow me, you’re going to suffer.”

3. It reveals Jesus’ divinity as God’s Son. The Messiah surpasses even the greatest saints of old.

For us today, it’s pretty simple; there are three main points of application.

1. We should marvel at the light of Jesus. Don’t get over the light of Jesus. Don’t read this and just go past it really quickly. But dive into this. There is so much more in this passage than we’ve yet to cover, and we don’t have time to uncover it.
2. We should continually listen to Jesus. Never stop listening to Jesus.
3. We should look with anticipation for Jesus’ return.

I told Zach this earlier in the week, and he did not agree with me, so that’s why we didn’t sing this song, and he will laugh with me right now. I said, “I’m going to bring it up in the sermon whether you sing it or not.” Maybe you’re familiar with this song and maybe you’re not, *These Are the Days of Elijah.* Anybody? Yep. Some people. Listen, listen, listen. These are the days of Elijah … I’m not going to sing it. I knew you wanted me to sing it. I’m not going to do it. I’m not going to do it.

These are the days of Elijah, declaring the Word of the Lord.

And these are the days of your servant, Moses, righteousness being restored.

And though these are days of great trial, of famine, and darkness, and sword,

Still, we are the voice in the desert, crying, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

Behold, He comes, riding on the clouds, shining like the Sun, at the trumpet call.

Lift your voice. The year of jubilee, and out of Zion’s hill salvation comes.

I know that some of you wanted to start singing, right then. You wanted to start singing; I know you did.

This past week, on Monday, I was in Winston-Salem, picking up something from my brother’s house. His kids were in the back yard with their eclipse glasses on, and they were staring up into the sky. I was like, “What in the world are y’all doing?” and they said, “Here, come look at this, Uncle Joe,” and they gave me their eclipse glasses, and I was able to look up at this crazy sight in the sky. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” Now, what’s interesting is that if you take those same eclipse glasses, and take them inside, and put them on, it’s pitch black. You can’t see anything. But if you go outside and you look up at the Sun, which was about 80% covered, it was blinding. It was super-bright. And I was driving back home that afternoon to Andrews, down Interstate 40, and guess what I saw? In offices, fields, it didn’t matter, people were outside of their offices like this. Tons of people. In fields, there were people staring up at the sky. They were looking at the eclipse. They were gazing up into the sky. Why? They were drawn to this incredible, bizarre, rare sight, this brilliant light in the sky. The Sun in our solar system is pretty powerful. Even if it’s completely covered, it’s still light outside. That’s nuts, right? We can’t even look at the Sun without protective lenses, even when it’s covered up. Yet, it says that in Heaven, Jesus’ glory is so great, so bright, so dazzling that there is no need for a Sun. That’s what it says in Revelation. Jesus is the center of Heaven. This Jesus, this Suffering Servant, this Son of Man, is the source of Heaven’s all-surpassing glory and light. He is the light, and He’s coming back.

Titus 2:13 says about we who are followers of Jesus,

*13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*

The angels told Jesus’ first disciples, as they were looking up into the heavens – I imagine if they’d had eclipse glasses they would have had them on. They were standing there and looking up into Heaven, and these angels say,

*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into Heaven. This same Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into Heaven on the clouds.*

Those in Christ, Christians today, we are the light of the world. Jesus is in you. The Light in you should be shining bright. Is the Light shining in the darkness? We need to look at the Light, we need to point to the Light, we need to listen to the Light, we need to look for the Light to return, and we need to share the Light while we wait.

I’m going to close by reading a story that one of my friends wrote. His name is Drew Hill and he’s a pastor in Greensboro. It’s called *The Beggar’s Light,* and he wrote this to illustrate this point.

There once was a band of beggars who were living in poverty. They were always freezing and hungry and slept on the stone streets of a cold, dark town. It was the only life they knew.

One particularly cold evening, a stranger showed up wildly excited and begged the beggars, saying, "You must come and see what I've found!" With the zeal of a toddler on Christmas morning, the stranger grabbed their hands and began to run. Before the beggars knew it, they were dashing down a dark alleyway, zigzagging to a part of town they never knew existed.

All of a sudden, when the beggars turned the corner, they immediately had to cover their eyes. At the end of the street was a blazing bonfire, surrounded by dozens of people who sounded as if they were laughing, singing, and celebrating. Uncertain at first, they hesitantly approached. Never before had they felt that kind of heat. Never before had they been exposed to a light so bright. As they drew near to the fire, their eyes slowly began to adjust. And for the first time in forever, they removed their hats, coats, and gloves. Oh, to feel the warmth of that fire! Oh, to see the light of one another's faces for the very first time! In the presence of the fire, the beggar's bodies began to thaw. Feeling returned to their fingers and toes. They could finally see. They could've sat there forever.

After some time, a kind old man came close. The beggars recognized his voice, for he had been the one leading the chorus of songs earlier in the night. With a gentle breath, he asked their names. The light seemed to reflect off his face as the moon reflects the sun. With a grin of delight, he listened to their stories and nodded as if he understood exactly what they were describing. It oddly felt as if they'd known him their entire lives.

The beggars and the kind old man talked together for what felt like minutes, but surely was hours. Then, the gentleman slowly stood to his feet. Leaning on a cane he’d whittled from a stick, he asked a question. "Do you have any friends or family who are still back home?" After hearing about all their loved ones who they'd left behind, he stuck two handfuls of torches into the fire. After every torch was lit, he carefully handed each of the beggars their own flame. The light was so bright that the beggars could no longer actually see the fellow who had handed them out. It was as if he’d disappeared before their very eyes.

With great eagerness and absolutely no delay, they knew what must happen next. Together, they departed in joyful song and hurried back the same way they had come. The beggars couldn't wait to share the light.

Isaiah 1:18 says,

*“Come, let’s settle this,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow.”*

May we, those who have been washed white as snow go and share the light of Jesus in this dark world, and tell people about this amazing Jesus’, whose blood washes away all of our sin and makes us white as light.

Let’s pray.

*Father, we do praise you, tonight, for giving us this, your Word, that we get to read and hear, and that we get to listen to your Word, and we get to learn more about you. Father, I pray that we would not close our eyes, or close our ears, to what you are saying. As you are speaking, as you are convicting us of sin, as your light penetrates the recesses of our hearts and minds, I pray that we would not fight against you. Lord, I pray that your Gospel of grace would be so radiant, would be so bright, that we would no longer try to hide, but that we would bask in all of its glory, and exalting the Name above all names, Jesus, we praise you, because you are not only the Messiah, the Christ, you are the Son of the Living God. You are God alone, and we need you. It’s in your name that we pray, Amen.*