

Transfiguration

Text: Mark 9:2-9 (NIV)

²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” ⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. ¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” ¹²Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

Theme: Are We there Yet?

One question that can make me go crazy in the car is, “Are we there yet?” Sometimes it seems like you just left the driveway and the question begins already. It is so frustrating when you are stuck in traffic, and the question starts coming. Every 15 minutes of a 200 mile journey the question sometimes comes. To be honest, we would often like to get to the destination without the journey. I find myself looking at the monitor often when we go to Europe and thinking, “Oh, we still have a long ways to go.”

It is tempting for us to get impatient in our Christian journey also. When good times come, we are tempted to think that we have arrived. But in these verses Jesus shows that we will have arrived only at the time of the resurrection of the dead.

I. God often gives us glimpses of the glory to come.

That is what happened on the mountain of transfiguration. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in all of His glory. His clothes were dazzling white, and Moses and Elijah also appeared with Him. They heard the Father’s voice telling them from heaven for a second time, “*This is My beloved Son; listen to Him.*” This was an experience that the disciples would never forget. In his second letter Peter recounts that they saw the Lord in His majestic glory on this mountain. They saw Jesus in the glory He had before He came to this earth and the glory that He would soon have again with His Father in Heaven.

Epiphany is the season when we remember those glimpses of Jesus glory. It begins when Jesus is revealed as the king of the Jews by the star to the Magi. Then we go to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized, and His Father declares, “*You are My beloved Son; with You I am well-pleased.*” Then we hear stories of many miracles. The blind, deaf, lame, and lepers are healed. Demons are cast out. Jesus stills the storm. The stories of this season remind of us Jesus’ power and how He has come to

destroy the misery that satan has brought into this world.

God gives each one of us personal glimpses of His glory. There have been times when we were full of guilt. We confessed our sin, and God's forgiveness seemed to give us a new lease on life. He washed us clean through Christ's redemption. We all have temptations that we struggle with. Sometimes we can see how God's Spirit gave us the strength to withstand in a certain time of temptation or freed us from an addiction that we had. There are also times of trouble or mourning when God fills our hearts with the peace that passes all understanding. He gives us a peace which the world cannot give. There are times when it seems like God is filling our lives with one blessing after another. We are healthy. We love our job, and it pays well. Our children get good grades and work hard in school. We feel that we have the most wonderful spouse in the world. We look at our lives and see that we have a lot to be thankful for. There are also times when we were in need, and we prayed to God for His help, and He brought it. Often His help came in a way that we never expected and when we least expected it. In a miraculous way He showed us that when we are weak, He is strong to save. The Lord gives us a glimpse of His glory when He brings His forgiveness, peace, healing, blessing, and delivers us from evil.

II. It is important to realize that those glimpses are not the end of the journey.

That is what Peter thought in our text. He wanted to stay on top of that mountain. He came up with an idea that they would build three tents, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. It was good to be there. He wanted to stay there. But this wasn't where the journey was supposed to end. The Father told Peter to listen to Jesus. Then Jesus took them down the mountain and told them not to tell anyone about what happened until after He had risen from the dead.

The danger with Jesus' miracles was that people would think that they were the destination. He would often tell people, that He healed, to tell no one what He did, but they couldn't help but spread the word. Before He knew it, people with all kinds of ailments were running to Jesus. In His mercy, He healed them all. But that was also not the end of the journey for any of those people. After Jesus fed the 5,000, they wanted the journey to end. They thought that they had arrived. They tried to make Jesus their king by force, so that He could give them all that they wanted. When Jesus told them that there was more, they all left Him. Jesus healed many people and even raised a few people from the dead, but eventually, they got other sicknesses, and they all died. Sometimes the Jesus' healing brought more hardship. In John 9 Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. When he confessed Jesus as his Savior, he was thrown out of the synagogue.

When God brings blessing and deliverance into our lives, we need to be careful not to think that this is the destination. When everything is going great, we would love it if life stayed that way. Our bank account would grow. We would be able to move into a bigger and better home. Our home life would be bliss. There will be no more sickness or trouble. But every day will not be full of sunshine and happiness. Eventually there will be grief and troubles. We rejoice in God's forgiveness and the strength us His Spirit to guard us in the hour of temptation, but the devil never gives up. Just when we think that we are standing firm against temptation, he strikes and hits us where we never expected it. We never saw it coming. Too often he finds a way to get us to fall into temptation. Sometimes we pray for God's help, and it is there almost instantaneously. Other times we pray, "Lord, where is the help that you promised?" God and His mercy seem so far away. We are driven to despair because it

seems like there is one problem after the next. They just don't let up. There will never be a time of perfect glory and peace for us on this earth.

III. The glory will come after we bear our crosses at the resurrection.

It was that way for Jesus. It is significant that Jesus' transfiguration is between two stories in which Jesus tells the disciples clearly that He would be betrayed into the hands of men. He would be killed and after three days rise from the dead. Jesus led His disciples down this mountain, and began His journey to the cross. There all the sins of the world would be laid on Him as He suffered and died. By his atoning death He opened heaven for us. But the grave couldn't hold Him. He rose from the dead and 40 days later ascended into Heaven, where he lives and reigns in all of His glory. For Jesus the journey is almost done. The only thing left is His return when He will gather all His people and bring them to His glory for all of eternity.

It is on that great day of the Lord when we will arrive. We bear our crosses in this world. Some of them are very heavy, but our Lord always provides the strength that we need. We struggle with temptation. It always seems to be around the corner, just waiting for us. In the end every one of us will die. You might think that our journey is completed then. Our soul is taken to the Lord, and our bodies are placed in the ground. But that is still not the end of the journey. The end of the journey is when Jesus returns, and we shall be raised from the dead. Body and soul we will be with the Lord in His glory forever. Revelation 21 says that there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. Literally translated Revelation 21:3 says, "*Now the tent of God is with men.*" It is the same word that is used in verse 5 of our text when Peter wanted to set up tents on the mountain. The mount of transfiguration wasn't the destination, but when the resurrection comes, God will set up His tent for us. Then we will have arrived. You might say that He will have prepared for us the vacation that will never end. We will reign with Him in His power and glory forever.

"Are we there yet?" You might say that our Christian journey is like a family going on vacation. The journey seems long. It is often difficult. Sometimes we would like to stop and set up camp before we have reached our destination. That is why we look to Jesus. He has arrived at our destination. He has gone on ahead of us and prepared the way. We trust in His saving death and resurrection which have opened the path to heaven, and we pray that He will guard and keep us that we don't not lose heart, but follow Him as we bear our crosses until that day when He will also receive us into His glory when we reach our journey's end.

Amen.

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