

Mark 9:2–13

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 October 2013

Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 00] Mark chapter 9 verses 2 through 13 that can be found on page 820 in the Bibles in front of you and the pews in front of you. Again that is Mark chapter 9 2 verses 13.

Please stand for the reading of God's Word. 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 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses and they were talking with Jesus.

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. For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

And a cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud. This is my beloved son. Listen to him. And suddenly looking around they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

[1 : 08] And as they were coming down with the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.

And they asked him, why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come? 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?

But I tell you, the Elijah has come and did to him whatever they pleased as it was written of him. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Please be seated. Hi. Well, it's good to be back in our own auditorium, knowing that this month has been filled with congregational worship services in other places in the city and at other times.

But what a great day we had out at Promontory Point those few weeks ago. With a blustery picnic. I wish we had the weather then that we have today.

[2 : 25] And what a week last week. Those of you who were able to be with us, joining with all four congregations at the Cultural Center in the morning. But we are glad to settle back into the rhythm of the South Side work, the four o'clock service, and our series in the Gospel of Mark.

We have been looking these five weeks now at who was Jesus and does he still matter?

I've wondered this week, what is it that keeps people from taking up with Jesus?

What keeps any of us from following him? Or in the literary convention of Mark's Gospel, what keeps us with being on the way with him?

For some, the story is just too far back. You might be one of those individuals sitting here today. The 2,000 years that separate the things we are reading from our own existence make us feel that we might have been born at a disadvantaged time.

[3 : 41] We reason that it would be easier to have engaged Jesus in real life. Life with him.

In order to make up our decision about him. But if you've been traveling with us over these five weeks, we've learned one thing, that Mark has an aim with this Gospel and it's to dispel all future generations, namely his readers, of the myth that the apostles had an advantage over you and me, born somewhat out of time.

I mean, take a look across the page. Chapter 8, that great culminating moment when their community with Jesus should have shed light upon Jesus.

And what does he say? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Verse 17, Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see?

Having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? Verse 21, And he said to them, Do you not yet understand?

[5 : 08] You see, there is something afoot today, almost called the apologetic of community. That if you travel with Christians over a long enough period of time, that itself will be an apologetic toward faith.

It will be easier for you to come to know who Jesus is by hanging out with those who claim to know him. Mark throws all this contemporary notion out the window.

Those who shared community with Jesus himself were no closer than you are, some 2,000 years later, to being able to understand who he was, what he meant, on the basis of their shared experience with him.

That's why Mark is writing. He wants his reader to know that you would have been no better off had you lived at that time.

The time when Jesus purportedly came down. The time when the heavens were split open and a voice descended to the terrain of human beings at his baptism and said, This is my son!

[6 : 34] No better off than being able to make that decision. In fact, what we have been arguing here is that this lack of apostolic advantage is meant by Mark to be good news for you and for me.

We didn't have to be there. Our faith, your consideration of who was Jesus and does he still matter, will not in any way hinge upon your experiential ability to travel with him.

It will depend upon your connections in the text that are said to relate to him. Well, it's been good news for all of us.

Our faith is not deficient in any sense. In any case, you should be told that by chapter 831 and on into the text that we are reading today, there's an entirely new orientation to Mark's gospel.

Now Jesus appears repetitively under the self-designated term Son of Man and he begins clearly to teach a new teaching for the first time in the gospel about his impending death and then resurrection.

[7 : 59] You can see it in 831, the Son of Man, he began to say, was going to suffer many things and be rejected, killed, and rise again. chapter 931, on the other end of our text today, we see this again.

For he was teaching to his disciples, saying to him, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days, he will rise.

You'll see it again in chapter 10, verses 33 and following. See, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles and they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him and after three days he will rise.

The whole orientation of the gospel has changed. And so has the dilemma for the reader. No longer are we concerned with the notion that this story might be too far back.

for us to latch on to. But that faith in him would require our minds to go too far.

[9 : 18] That in this one we have one who is raised into the heavens and is capable of bringing others with him.

That's too far for our sensibilities. It's what gets talked about today about some subjective personal experience of Christ that he has ascended into heaven and can take you with him.

Let me put it as simply as I can. It's what comes off as Christianity and some emotionalism. Christianity and this over-the-top experientialism.

It's what weds Christianity to anti-intellectualism. It's not that the objection is that's too far back. It's that you are now claiming it is so far up.

And we wonder who was he? And does he still matter? We'll take a look at our text. Chapter 9 2-13 The very thing our text seems bent on conveying is this that Jesus just like the Greek gods in the Greco-Roman period was capable of standing amid the counsel of the divines and bringing a few buddies with him along the way.

[11 : 10] Yes, indeed. This is our text. Look at the hints. Chapter 9 verse 2 this sense that we are now being taken up into heaven.

The phrase after six days echoing the tradition in the book of Exodus of Moses who had to wait six days before ascending the high mountain to meet with God in distinction from Exodus 19 where it says God came down on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24 Moses is called to go up to God after six days.

Take look at this phrase here on the high mountain. He led them up verse 2 a high mountain. It wasn't long ago I was in the theater watching Percy Jackson and the lightning thief.

The great cinematic display of the son of Poseidon. And when one is brought in that movie or in the clash of titans or anything else related to the Greco-Roman period of the gods you enter onto Mount Olympus where all the gods dwell and they are all backlit and white whiter than any laundry detergent could make it white.

And indeed the imagery is here just as in that ancient day Moses in his days of preparation waited six days to ascend the mountain where he would go into the presence of God on the mountain so too Jesus now takes Peter James and John by themselves.

[13 : 31] And so we look at a text that I think is unlike any other in the gospel of Mark the claim that Jesus has the ability to enter into the presence of the living God and take others with him.

And for many today that goes beyond my sensibilities and you are asking me to go too far. Well it's a fair question and so we ought to look at it.

Does their attendance with him on the mount of transfiguration somehow help them as apostles in determining whether or not they should follow Jesus or get on the way with him or take up with him.

Look at the event. The event is there in verses 2 through 4. And I want to see what it was like. And then I want to look at verses 5 and 6 because I want you to see how it was understood.

And then in verses 7 and 8 what it actually meant. And then finally what the apostles did with it and what that might mean for you.

[14 : 54] The event after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves and matter of factly written and he was transfigured before them and his clothes became radiant intensely white as no one on earth could bleach them and there appeared to them Elijah with Moses and they were talking with Jesus.

The word transfigured transfigured is commonly known in English as metamorphosis.

That it's a word that is translated most often through the word transformed. There's a shorter aspect of the term where you're just morphed.

any child here under seventh grade will understand that term because most of their toys today morph. They change.

They are transformed from one thing to another. Now the term here relates to what happened to Jesus in his physicality, his form, his person.

[16 : 21] he was transfigured. He was like, to put it in the language of my screened-in porch last summer, he moves almost from larva to then being in the midst of the chrysalis and then boom!

Out comes the monarch. That certainly doesn't work. It's not as if he was larva and then a monarch, but that's what change means.

That his entire appearance, his physical form, was fundamentally altered. Altered in what appears to be some incredibly glorified state.

His clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. That's what it was like.

I don't know if you've ever caught that kind of a moment in just the ordinariness of life. For me, it happened two summers ago, fortunate enough to get a backstage pass during the Blues Fest in Grant Park when Eddie C.

[17 : 42] Campbell took the main stage. stage. And I stood backstage with him before he went out dressed in long white suit.

It seemed very ordinary when I was with him. If you know Eddie, it was ordinary. But when he took the stage, and the lighting from the city was all funneling upon him, and the thousands out on the lawn were pulsating to him, his form changed.

It was almost as if he was haloed in the light. Eddie C. Campbell transfigured. Something like that. Something like cobalt blue backdrop and the ordinariness of Jesus a moment before was now completely changed.

I think it would be the most special experience in the life of the apostles. I can't imagine it.

We sang fairest Lord Jesus, but I can't quite get my mind around it. this one so intensely changed before them.

[19 : 19] The Son of Man. Think of it. In Daniel, that ancient prophet talks about a moment when the Ancient of Days was going to set forth his judgment on all the earth and one would come forth into the clouds one like a son of man.

And according to Daniel, this one who is the son of man entering into the cloud and the dominion of God to give judgment over all things was the one to whom God was going to give the kingdom.

them. And Mark chapter 1 verse 15 Jesus says repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The son of man and Daniel was the one that all humanity was to serve.

That his kingdom was going to be everlasting. Jesus with his parables on the kingdom and what it was to be. I don't know what it would have looked like.

I do know that John in the apocalypse was given a vision of the son of man and the language that he relates to the visual look of the son of man in his vision is none other than equating it with the ancient of days in Daniel.

[20 : 48] John says he turned to see a voice and he saw one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest and the hairs of his head were white like wool as white as snow.

My youngest has very blonde hair. I mean as blonde as blonde can go. And people often look at me and her and Lisa and her and they say where did you get the color of your hair?

And her response like every sixth grader should be is simple it must be from my grandpa because her grandpa has white hair. white as white as snow his eyes were like a flame of fire his feet were burnished bronze refined in the furnace and his voice was like the roar of many waters and in his right hand he held seven stars and from his mouth came a sharp two edged sword and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

something like that is what they saw and the response in the book of revelation is that John falls at his feet.

I think if you and I were there that would be an experience unlike any other and indeed I think it would be enough to make us follow him you would think what happened what how was it understood look at verses five and six Peter said to Jesus Rabbi it is good that we are here let us make three tents one for you one for Moses one for Elijah for he did not know what to say for they were terrified literally ekphabo they were frightened out of their minds now Peter gets a bad rap here normally doesn't he oh here comes Peter foolish old Peter sees this incredible thing the most incredible thing that you or I could ever wish to see regarding a personal experience with

[23 : 31] Jesus in a way that would make you think he has the ability to enter into the council of the gods and bring me too we go look what he wants to build houses three houses actually it makes perfect sense to me I think he has good exegetical grounds for this line I mean think about it what does Jacob do in Genesis when he has that dream of the vision and the ladder that comes between the heavens and the earth and he awakens and he says I will call this place Bethel the house of God and he erects a monument because he is aware just like in the Greek gods of today who dwell upon Mount Olympus and it can move to its location he is aware that what has happened here is the doorway the gateway the place where he has been brought into the presence of where

God is with could anything else be more clear than that this is to be marked this is to be commemorated this is the most unusual experience of my entire life I have been brought into the presence of gods one house for each of you I think it's a very textually warranted feeling but it wasn't all that commendable look at the writer Mark he intertrudes into the dialogue as if he wants us to be reminded of something verse 6 for he did not know what to say for they were terrified and this word terrified as I already mentioned to you is the word for fear and fear as we have found out through eight chapters in Mark is never something that Mark is commending to you this is not like reading wisdom literature where the point of the story is to fear the!

no when you! read! Mark if you! are fearing well that's always in contrast to faithing fear is never commended in Mark I mean take a look don't you remember back in chapter 4 the healing or the settling of the waters verse 40 of chapter 4 why are you so afraid have you still no faith look fear there is contrasted with faith fear is the mark of someone who's not getting it in chapter 5 pastor jackson brought us through those three incredibly moving healings and in each instance there's the image of fear in the midst of them and look at verse 36 what he says to the ruler of the synagogue do not fear only believe he doesn't want fear he wants faith we find it all the way through chapter 6 chapter 7 and chapter 8 fear is never commended indeed fear is the way the book ends

I came upon this this is not going to be gender friendly I'm sorry but I've come upon it this week and I believe it to be true we normally look to the end of mark where the appearance comes to the women and we say isn't this a wonderful thing he going to elevate women he's going to bring himself and his first resurrected appearance is going to be to women but what's the reaction of the women in chapter 16 verse 8 they go away in great fear and the book stops it is as if mark wants to say now women you have nothing on the men as dumb as they looked all through the gospel of mark they've been completely clueless never gotten it and their experience with Jesus has done them nothing to bring them to faith by the way the same is true for women it's true for all of us so Peter while he does something here that is commendable from our vantage point according to

Mark it's not commendable he's not yet having faith that Jesus is unique from Elijah John the Baptist Moses he's just one of the Elijah the Baptists and the Moses he's still just rabbi and so what was it like unlike anything you or I could imagine how was it understood well it was misunderstood and what is the corrective take a look at verses seven and eight to find out what it really meant and a cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud this is my beloved son listen to him and suddenly looking around they no longer saw anyone with them but

[29 : 04] Jesus only here comes the voice of God here comes the second moment in the gospel when everything is silent but God's voice in chapter one it is baptism the heavens are opened the voice comes down and says behold this is my beloved son again chapter nine we're at the high point of the book the center of the entire gospel but it's not that the voice is coming down from the heavens onto the earth in order to let us know who he is even though we didn't understand it it's that Jesus has brought people up into the heavens and the cloud is in the midst of them and the voice even there says this is my beloved son and the!

voice of the entire gospel the empty tomb saying go to Galilee just as he told you he'll be there that's Mark that's Mark listen to him we don't understand I'll take you up to have him then listen to him we don't understand the voice at the empty tomb go just as he told you so it will be the voice of God clearly a connection here on this is my beloved son to psalm 2 psalm 2 was the prophetic messianic psalm where people on the earth were living in derision to God and he laughs in the heavens and says

I will install my own king on Zion my son the one in whom I am well pleased and it's that one in psalm 2 that is to receive the worship of all the people we are to kiss the son and serve him while we are able in other words we're to follow him we're to follow the son of psalm 2 we're to follow the son of David and Daniel 7!

indeed Jesus then! according to Mark is the promised one of psalm 2 who will rule the earth and is a clear indication the transfiguration that Jesus' ministry is being validated by both Moses and Elijah they are validating his work not only that he is now taking the baton from the first prophet to the last prophet to his own hands and in their disappearance of him almost as it were back into the heavens where they belong he has returned to the earth and he is the one that we are to follow it's his game now it's all him that's what it meant that the great one is this one and the voice says listen to him wow we need to wrap this up but

I want you to see that at least that's what it was like that's how it was misunderstood that's what it really means or meant now what did the disciples do with it well they didn't tell anyone about it I'm not going to have time today to deal with really 9 through 13 sorry but they didn't tell anyone about it they certainly didn't fully understand it but I also want you to know that later in life they did not appeal to this experience of being brought onto the high mountain as the grounds for faith in coming generation you need to know this the gospel of mark is not asking you to believe on the basis of Peter's in your mind perhaps subjective personal experience where he came into the presence of

[33 : 43] God and therefore believe that Jesus could bring people just like him into God's presence no he does not make that argument take a look 2nd Peter chapter 1 he is now an aged man and he is now giving his pen voice to interpreting the event of this narrative and in 2nd Peter 1 verse 16 he writes as an old man ready to lay off his flesh we did 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 for when he received honor and glory from God the father and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven for we were with him on the event that we have been reading in the gospel of

Mark but he does not ask you the reader to take up with Jesus to get on the way to get behind him to begin following him because he saw something that was unbelievable you wouldn't do it anyway because you would think well that's a rather high strung preacher type emotionalism anti intellectualism experientialism I'm not doing Christianity along those look what he does say verse 19 of 2nd Peter 1 and we have something more sure more sure more sure than that experience more sure than being taken up into heaven more sure than standing amongst those who are already in a glorified state more sure than me saying God I'll follow you if you would just give me a momentary vision or a glimpse that you're real and that it's all true no more sure more sure than any experience in human life he says we have something that is the prophetic word 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 someone's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man but men spoke from

God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit and he alludes in that answer to three texts! in the scripture certainly Psalm 2 with the quote that he heard on the Mount of Transfiguration that's more sure according to Peter certainly Psalm 119 105 where the word of God is the light the lamp that is to lead your way certainly Malachi 2 1 to 4 where it talks about the morning star rising in your heart and the day dawning and your ability to skip like a calf from the stall all of which John the Baptist was to prepare you for so you sit here today who was Jesus does he still matter I will not appeal to you that you would have been better off or had an easier time of it if you had lived when he did Mark wants to free you from that illogical thinking and I will not appeal to you on the basis of

Peter's experience or my own although I know him to be true I appeal to you simply on the basis of the biblical text that everything we are reading of him in!

is embedded by way of fulfillment from things that came on before him this is the defense of the gospel who was he he was the one all the words of God moved toward what does it mean he is the one that all the peoples of the earth must follow on the basis of his word so get on the way our heavenly father we come to you thanking you for your word strengthen us give us faith that we might walk with you in christ's name amen to the