

The Transfiguration

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[0:00] Good morning, church. My name is Patrick Tetzlaff, and I'm one of the elders at Grace Church in Racine.

My wife Erin and I live in Caledonia, and God has gifted us with the responsibility to raise four kids, ranging in ages currently from 17 to 25.

And I don't preach for a living, so please be kind. I was talking to Sharon before the service and said, you guys have a substitute teacher today, and she wanted to know if it was okay to misbehave.

I guess that's up to you. So your lead pastor, Mike Silvati, and our lead pastor, Mike Matheson, are friends. And your pastor, Mike, asked our pastor, Mike, if Grace Church could bring a guest preacher for this Sunday.

And when our pastor, Mike, put out the request, I was really thrilled to just have an opportunity to come here and open up God's Word for you this morning.

[1:08] So I'm going to read our passage and then say a short prayer. The passage for this morning is Mark 9, verses 2 through 13.

And if you're following in one of the Bibles behind you, that's on page 1004. Again, that's Mark 9, verses 2 through 13. Listen while I read 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.

[2:08] 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.

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. 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 that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him. Let's pray and ask God to help us this morning.

Dear Heavenly Father, we do yearn for and earnestly seek your word. Lord, I just ask that you would give us ears to hear and soft hearts to receive your word.

[3:20] And would it indeed not return empty? And might you be glorified this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So our passage for this morning is about the transfiguration of Jesus.

This is when Jesus and his closest disciples, when he presents something that's really hard for us to even comprehend. And that's Jesus in all his glory. And it would be easy for us to just sit together and gaze at the glory of God on display in this text.

But I think if we're not careful, we might miss an important message that Mark intended for us to receive. So I want to show you from this text how Jesus' suffering was an inseparable part of his glory.

And I also want you to see that we need to listen to Jesus when we are called to suffer for him. So that's the main objective here this morning is for me to show you from this text that Jesus' suffering was inseparable from his glory.

And also I want you to see that we need to listen to Jesus when we are called to suffer for him. And just to kind of help you follow the message along, we're going to look at, we're going to start off looking at events before the transfiguration.

[4:38] And we're going to look at the transfiguration itself. And then we're going to look at after the transfiguration. So before the transfiguration. And why I want to start there is because if we're to properly understand how the transfiguration is presented in Mark's gospel, we need to back up just a little bit and see what's happening in the text just before this event.

And just prior to the transfiguration, Peter makes his remarkable confession that Jesus is the Christ. And some consider Peter's confession to be the very center of Mark's gospel.

And last week, your pastor, Mike, asked you to consider who are you in Christ? And in Mark chapter 8, 27 through 30, Jesus asks his disciples, who do people say that I am?

And in any normal circumstances, this would be a little bit of an odd question, but Jesus has been going all throughout the region. He's been teaching, healing, casting out demons, performing miracles.

And all along, he's gaining quite a following, quite a reputation. So the question really isn't that strange. And when Jesus asks, who do people say that I am?

[5:53] The disciples respond and they say, well, some people say you're John the Baptist and other people say you're Elijah and other people say you're a prophet. Jesus flips the question, looks at his disciples and says, who do you say that I am?

Peter is quick to answer. You are the Christ. And all throughout Mark's gospel, Jesus has been revealing himself to be the son of God and the son of man.

But this is the first time one of his disciples have confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

This is a very significant moment in Mark's gospel. But just after Peter makes this confession, and again, we're still before the transfiguration, Jesus starts to tell his disciples that he must suffer.

And not only suffer, but be completely rejected and die at the hands of the religious leaders. At the end of Mark 8.31, he adds that after three days, he will rise again.

Now, Peter, who just confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, hears this and he can't handle the truth. Peter, who's usually bold, begins to rebuke Jesus because he can't imagine his friend, his teacher, his Messiah would suffer and die.

[7:15] And Jesus turns towards Peter and says, get behind me, Satan. Peter, at this moment, he doesn't see the true nature of Jesus Christ.

He doesn't understand why Jesus would need to suffer and die. And he strongly rebukes Peter. Jesus strongly rebukes Peter. And Peter had just confessed this big confession that Jesus is the Christ.

And yet, he just can't make sense out of this concept of suffering and dying. Because Peter knows Jesus. Peter is starting to see him for who he is.

But at the moment, in Mark's gospel, he doesn't see the true nature of Jesus Christ. And he can't see how Jesus' suffering is an inseparable part of his glory. And so inseparable is Jesus' suffering from his glory that Peter's attempt to deny or avoid it earns him one of the strongest rebukes possible.

But before, as readers and hearers, that we go too hard on Peter, I think we should just take a moment, consider our own hearts. And perhaps that's you.

[8:26] Perhaps you know something of Jesus. Maybe you feel some affection for Jesus. And you know intellectually that Jesus died for sins. But you just, you can't clearly see that your own sin, your own rejection of God, and your desire to do things your own way, that that's why Jesus had to suffer and die on a Roman cross.

And I get it. This is quite possibly the most humbling thing imaginable, to realize that your sin is so offensive to a holy God, that the only way to save you was to send his perfect son to suffer and die,

so that you might have the opportunity to repent and receive eternal life in his name. And this is humbling for us, but it's glorious to see and know that God loves his people so much that he sent his son, his only son, to die on the cross.

So some people think, maybe like Peter at this moment, that Jesus' suffering was avoidable, or that somehow his suffering diminished his glory. But that was about to be revealed to him in a very different way.

A little side story. My wife and I, on the day we got married, just kind of prior to the ceremony, we shared this special moment. Aaron had spent the day getting prepared for our wedding, and I spent the morning anxiously awaiting the ceremony.

[9:53] I'm sure she's very embarrassed that I'm using this illustration. But just before the ceremony, I sat in a large room alone with my back to the door, and it was just me and our wedding photographer, and it was really quiet.

And I just heard a door open and close, and then I heard music start playing, and Aaron comes walking in the room behind me and just starts singing. And out of nowhere, I just heard this beautiful song, and I immediately broke into tears, and she slowly made her way over to me and came around the side, which is when I first laid eyes on her.

And I was just breathless. I was just taken by how she looked standing there in front of me. And at that moment, I saw her in a different way, and it moved me, and it opened my eyes and my heart to a different level of understanding.

And I think sometimes when we see people like that in a bit of a different light, we never look at them quite the same again. And back to our passage, we just talked about the events before the transfiguration, but let's look at what happened during this amazing event.

So we read that this is six days after Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus takes his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, on an excursion up the mountain.

[11:14] And what a privilege this must have been for them, and what a privilege for us that this is recorded and we can read about it in our Bibles. And as I read this passage, I just wondered what Peter, James, and John were thinking as they trekked up the mountain.

Maybe they thought we're just heading to a peaceful spot to pray, or perhaps they thought Jesus would have a special word of teaching to share with them. But whatever they were thinking, I'm pretty sure they didn't expect what Jesus was about to reveal to them.

And this location on a mountain is important. All throughout the Bible, encounters with God, including with God and Moses and Elijah, these encounters occurred on a mountain.

And the disciples arrive at the top of the mountain, and Jesus is transfigured right before their eyes. And the text is really concise. We just read that Jesus' clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

And this intense white is speaking to Jesus' sinless perfection, unstained, and never yielded the temptation. He was perfectly obedient to the Father, completely unconformed to this fallen world.

[12:36] And you might imagine that pure light is the absence of color, but actually pure white is the entire spectrum of visible light at equal proportions and equal intensity, all shining together.

It's actually the most full light possible. And this is the type of pure white light that was on display 2,000 years ago on this mountaintop.

Jesus reveals his glory to Peter, James, and John. He was teaching them something special. He was trying to indeed show them and help them understand the true nature of his glory.

And if Jesus' transfiguration wasn't amazing enough, what happens next terrifies the disciples. And if you're following along, I'm in Mark 9, 4 through 6.

Now, standing there in the intensity of this light, Elijah and Moses appear. The disciples are stunned. But then there's Peter.

[13:43] You know, I love how true to human nature the Bible is because Peter, the bold disciple, although he's stunned, and I imagine he really doesn't know what to do with all this, he suggests, how about I make some tents so that we can all hang out for a while together?

And in truth, we don't know what they're thinking at that moment, but we do read that they were terrified, and that's to be expected. Because all throughout Scripture, when people even get a glimpse of God's glory, the number one reaction is fear.

And I don't know that we can really appreciate how intense this experience was for them. Moses and Elijah's presence alongside Jesus is very important.

Moses, who God used to deliver his people from slavery and deliver the Ten Commandments to them on stone tablets, Moses represents the law. And Elijah was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, and his presence represents the prophets of God.

And they're both noteworthy, the fact that Moses and Elijah are standing next to Jesus because Jesus is the fulfillment of both the law and the prophets.

[14:59] And Jesus says so himself in Luke 24, where after he rose from the dead, Jesus is talking with some of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and he begins to tell them, and he starts with Moses and the prophets, and tells them that all Scripture points to and has its fulfillment in him.

And then, as if to put an even bigger exclamation point on the transfiguration, God speaks. And he says, this is my beloved Son.

Listen to him. Can you imagine hearing God speak? And then, in the next instant, we read that everyone is gone, and Jesus is standing alone with them.

And I think sometimes when we see something so profound or so moving, we're just left speechless. A couple weeks ago, I traveled to Carbondale, Illinois, with my daughter Olivia to view the solar eclipse, and after a long drive, we watched this slow but steady progression of the moon covering the sun, and then there was a moment, this moment like a light switch going off, when the full beauty of the event was revealed, and the final sliver of the sun was blocked, and it got much darker, much cooler.

All you could see was this glowing ring of light, a halo around a totally black moon, and there were solar flares making these little peaks of red around the ring, and there was a thousand or so people around us, and they all went quiet for a moment.

[16:43] And we were just all in awe, I think, of what we were witnessing. And I have to imagine, as the disciples are walking down the mountain after the transfiguration, there's a bit of stunned silence as they try to make sense of what Jesus had just shown them.

And on their way down, Jesus charges them to keep what they have seen to themselves. And I thought, okay, they've just witnessed the most amazing thing they've probably ever seen in their lives, and Jesus asks them to keep it quiet, but not forever.

He asks them to keep it quiet until he has risen from the dead. Immediately following his transfiguration, after they saw Jesus' glory with their own eyes, after the disciples saw Moses and Elijah, they heard God speak.

After all that, Jesus immediately starts speaking of his death and suffering. In Mark 9, 9-13, we read about their trek back down the mountain, and the disciples being asked to keep quiet about what they've seen, but they do have questions.

They especially have questions about, what does Jesus mean, saying that he's going to rise from the dead, and remember that get-behind-me-Satan rebuke isn't all that far off of this event, but I think the disciples aren't quite bold enough to ask Jesus directly what he means, so instead they ask him, why did the scribes say that Elijah must first return?

[18:15] It was their understanding from Scripture that the actual Elijah would return before the day of the Lord, and only then would there be a resurrection from the dead, but as readers of Mark's Gospel, we know that John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for the Lord, and he was the one that came in the spirit of Elijah, preaching a gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus knows, I think, that they're not seeing all of these pieces clearly, and then in verse 12 he tells them that Elijah does come to restore all things, and goes on to say he has come, and he was treated terribly.

John the Baptist was treated horribly for delivering an amazing and beautiful message that people should repent and believe, just repent and believe, and receive forgiveness of sins.

John the Baptist was beheaded by King Herod at a party in order to grant the wish of a young girl to dance for him, all so Herod could save face.

And in the same conversation, Jesus asked them to consider as well, how is it written that the Son of Man should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? He may have wanted them to think of the prophet Isaiah, and if you read Isaiah 53, it's about the suffering Messiah who would bear the grief of God's people.

He would be pierced for their transgressions. He would be crushed for their iniquities. He would be oppressed and afflicted like a lamb led to the slaughter that would be despised and rejected by men.

[19:57] He would be a man of sorrows and one acquainted with grief. As he walks with his disciples down the mountain, I believe Jesus is connecting the dots for them.

He's trying to get them to see that the Son of Man must suffer and die before being raised in glory and that this is all in accordance with the scriptures. I think at this moment it appears, and as we read on in Mark's Gospel, it appears that the disciples were still a little bit perplexed.

None of this would become crystal clear to them until after the transfiguration and after they saw their Savior crucified, after they saw him go to the cross without a fight, and then three days later, as he said, rise from the dead.

It was only after the transfiguration that they would realize that greater love has no more glorious expression than that someone would lay down his life for his friends.

So now moving on to after the transfiguration, which includes us here today and Mark's original readers. The original readers of Mark would have been in the second half of the first century, about 30 or so years after Jesus' death and resurrection.

[21:22] Mark's Gospel is beautifully arranged in a particular way to deliver a particular message to its readers. And the original readers of Mark's Gospel, they were at a time of much turmoil, much chaos, and although the church was growing, they were meeting resistance at almost every turn.

And for those original readers, the main message of this passage was that as Jesus' disciples, they need to continue to listen to Jesus, even in the face of suffering and turmoil, because Jesus' own glory was inseparable from the suffering he endured on the cross.

The disciples who witnessed the transfiguration may not have originally been able to see this clearly, and that should challenge us as readers to ask ourselves, do we see clearly this connection between Jesus' glory and his suffering?

And are we listening to him? And as we read Mark's Gospel with 21st century eyes, we can see quite clearly how Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53 and many, many other Old Testament scriptures.

And like the original readers, we are living in a time of much turmoil and chaos, and we encounter resistance. At times it feels like we're living in a world, living in a society that just appears to be heading further and further away from the truth.

[22:45] And in the middle of all that we're living in after the transfiguration on this side of the cross, we need to listen. We need to listen to Jesus, even when his words are not exactly what we want to hear, they are what we need to hear.

God's glory was on display, even magnified when Jesus suffered and died for us, and as well we are called to follow him. The perfectly holy, perfectly glorious son of God laid down his perfect life for broken and sinful people like me, like you.

What else can we do? What else should we do but listen to him? We especially need to listen when God calls us, when he tells us, when he places us in situations that we're going to suffer as Jesus' disciples.

When we're tempted to think falsely that the Christian life here and now is supposed to be a smooth road, we need to realize that we're called to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to walk the path of sacrifice and suffering.

We need to understand that we can expect to experience suffering and mistreatment as his followers. After all, this is the Son of God, and we are to listen to him.

[24:08] You know, right before the transfiguration, Jesus told his disciples, Mark 8, 34, if anyone would come after me, let him deny

himself and take up his cross and follow me.

And none of us in our own nature, none of us in our own power wants to bear a cross. When we face suffering or persecution, we need to face it with full faith in the promises of God and a confidence that his Spirit will guide us.

Peter, in 1 Peter, he actually writes that we can rejoice, rejoice in our suffering. Because if God deems it necessary that we suffer, Peter says that this will result in a tested genuineness of our faith, and it will ultimately result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So church, expect that you will suffer, and the types of suffering may not be getting killed or tortured for our testimony, but we will almost certainly experience the loss of relationships, potentially lower social status, potentially suffer financial loss, and it will feel like at times we are suffering greatest when we have to even forgive our enemies.

Regardless of how, when, and how much we are called to suffer, we need to listen and follow Jesus. You know, back to my wedding day, if I go back to that first look, you'd ask me at that moment, I would have told you everything is absolutely perfect.

[25:55] And I think for some of us, that's our experience when we first receive the gift of salvation. It's just, there's this weight lifted, and we can just see so clearly what God has done for us.

We're just filled with joy. And it's sort of like that with marriage too, because many years later, and we do have a wonderful marriage, and it hasn't all been smooth sailing, we do our best to show each other grace and offer each other forgiveness as God in Christ has forgiven us.

We struggle to raise children in a blended family, which creates all kinds of tension, and at times the burden has felt really heavy. But we suffer through these obstacles together. We grow closer together as we grow closer in Christ.

And as a result, our marriage is actually stronger today than it was on that perfect wedding day. And our faith in Christ, it's like that too, that when it's tested through suffering, we learn to rely more on God and less on ourselves.

And that testing produces a steadfastness of our faith. And don't ever fall into the trap of thinking that your suffering is pointless. Every single drop of it will be used to God's glory.

[27:11] Mike, excuse me, Mike Bullmore, former lead pastor at Crossway Church, used to say, and I love this, nothing is wasted in God's economy.

You know, I said earlier that it was a privilege for us that we have this event recorded in our Bibles, and Peter actually refers to the transfiguration in 2 Peter chapter 1, where he writes that he was an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty, and he recounts how he heard the voice of God say, this is my beloved son.

Then he says, he writes in 2 Peter, that we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, and that we would do well to pay attention to God's word.

So paying careful attention to God's word is studying it, cherishing it, sharing it with others. It's one of the primary ways we can listen to Jesus. And as I wrap this sermon up, I just, I want to take a moment to speak directly to any non-Christians that are here with us this morning.

I don't know how you got here, maybe you were invited by a friend or family member or co-worker, but however you got here, I'm really glad, I know the church is really glad that you're here today.

[28:31] All of us who are Christians were at one point not Christians until God came in and gave us a new heart and allowed us to hear the gospel and repent of our sins and believe and place our faith in Jesus Christ as life, death, and resurrection.

And so for any non-Christians in the room, I just, I'd ask you to consider something. Consider the character of God on display in this passage.

You may think you know something about Jesus, the teacher, or the Jesus, the good moral man, teacher of ancient wisdom, but until you know Jesus Christ as both the Son of Man and the Son of God, you don't really know him.

And until you see how he willingly went to the cross to pay for the sins of all who would come to him in repentance and faith, your sins as well, you don't really know him.

The disciples needed to see and understand how Jesus' glory was inseparable from his suffering and they needed to see how it actually magnifies the glory of God.

[29:43] God's glory is multiplied and there is joy before the angels of heaven over every sinner who repents. I mean, the most glorious person ever in human history traded his mortal life for sinners like me and you so that we could have eternal life together with him.

And this exchange might not make sense to you now, but I tell you that Jesus did this because he loves you and because his suffering for you and your acceptance of him magnifies the glory of God. This Jesus made a way for undeserving sinners like me and you to receive the gift of grace and be welcomed into his family. And if that Jesus isn't your Lord and Savior, I would ask, why not? What's holding you back? If this Jesus that we read about here in the Transfiguration, if he isn't worth following, if he isn't worth listening to, who or what else is, will you listen to him? Will you listen to him as he calls your name? Church, let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, I'm just grateful for your word.

[31:10] I am so grateful for the opportunity to share this word, this wonderful passage with your people here at Christ the King in Kenosha. And I just, I pray that your spirit is working now in the hearts of your people, that those that know you well see you in an even brighter light, that those who only know you marginally would come a step closer to knowing you fully and that those who don't know you all would be intrigued and drawn to learn more.

The power of your spirit, we ask you to work, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.