

Jesus' Transfiguration

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[0:00] And we'll read again verse 1. Verse 1 and 2, And Jesus 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.

And, you know so many times Mark uses the word and, just to link everything together. 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.

The Apostle Paul wrote, I want to know Christ. Surely all who love the Lord Jesus must echo these words, I want to know Christ.

And Mark and his Gospel helps us to know Christ, to know the Lord Jesus, and to help us to know him through some of the key events in Jesus' life, in Jesus' ministry.

Of course, one of the pivotal events in Jesus' life is what we've read here in Mark 9. This is popularly known as the transfiguration, the transfiguration of Jesus.

[1:19] You see, in fact, that little heading there in your Bible, that transfiguration, that change in appearance that happened when Jesus was before three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, and before Elijah and Moses.

Now, of course, we'll look at all these details in a moment. But, you know, as we focus our thoughts on this great event, well, of course, we do it for a number of reasons.

Well, as we said right at the beginning, we want to know Christ. We want to learn more of our glorious Saviour. We want to worship him. We want to express our praise to him for who he is and as he has made himself known to us through his word.

And we might say this as well. Well, we have a communion service this evening. And look at that context. The context of even this service before this evening's service, then we can use this service as a preparatory service to help us to participate in the remembering of the death of the Lord Jesus.

So, as we look at what happened in that high mind to when Jesus was transfigured, then I pray that as we go through this passage, we'll see how this helps us to remember the Lord's death, even this transfiguration.

[2:44] Because, of course, as we've already seen in Mark chapter 8, Jesus has now been speaking about his imminent suffering, his imminent death. And in the context, in relation to that suffering and death, we find Jesus being transfigured.

And as we said, look at the details of that transfiguration. So, there must be a connection between the suffering and death of Jesus. And then this, yes, all but brief, but this particular appearing of Jesus in all his unveiled glory.

So, as I say, we'll use this service, we'll use this service to help us to prepare for the supper this evening. Well, let's just think a little more about this passage.

Let's think of the background. What's Jesus been doing up to this point in his public ministry? He's been making known his power. He's been making known his authority.

He's been making known his credentials as the promised saviour of mankind. He's been doing this through preaching and teaching, through miracles, through healing.

[3:51] He's making known who he is. He's the Son of God. He's the one whom the prophets foretold, the one whom we read in the Old Testament, foretold of the coming saviour, the coming Messiah.

And Jesus is on that mission. He's on that mission to bring salvation to his own. He's going to do it through his perfect obedience to God's law.

And of course, that obedience is going to culminate in his death and resurrection. He's come to bring in his reign. He's come to bring in his kingdom into the hearts of his people.

He is the king. He's the king who left the glory of heaven to come to earth. He's got out born in a stable. He's come to reign, to reign in victory.

He's come to triumph over sin, over Satan, and over death itself. And he'll do that as the promised Messiah, as the promised Christ, the promised saviour.

[4:50] He'll do that as the glorious Son of God. He'll do it through the glory of his person. He'll do it through the glory of the cross. And he'll do it through the glory of the resurrection.

And so, you know, we've reached here, this is the middle part of Mark's gospel. So often when something's at the centre, there's something very, very important, and it's central. And this is central to Mark's gospel.

Here we might see a turning point in making known these truths about Jesus and his mission. And, well, we've already seen that the turning points that have happened.

Peter's confessed. Remember a few weeks ago we noticed this. He's confessed that Jesus is the Christ. He's the Messiah. And then immediately after, Jesus made known what that means.

Suffering and death. I mean, up to this point, this hasn't been spoken of. But now this has been more and more spoken of by Jesus about the suffering, death and resurrection.

[5:49] And from this point we might see Jesus' face is firmly set towards Jerusalem, towards the place where he's going to be betrayed, where he's going to suffer death, and of course we'll rise again, we'll rise the third day.

So from this point onwards, as we said, he's going to continually refer to his betrayal, his death and his resurrection. So we might see here's a new development happening, a turning point, making known the purpose of Jesus' mission.

And as we said, that it's got to have this link. There's got to be that connection between what Jesus is saying about what's about to happen to him and for him, or for his people, and the transfiguration of that high mountain.

And that's why chapter 9, verse 1, comes where it is. And he said to them, as we said, the link, the connection, truly I say to you, there's some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.

So there's Jesus before all those people that are standing with him, people that he's been teaching, what it means to know everlasting life, or some there who are going to see something wonderful, something glorious, something majestic in relation to Jesus.

[7:09] But then we might ask, well, what is Jesus referring to? This verse might sound very cryptic. You know, we might think we can't automatically understand what Jesus is saying.

I mean, what's he referring to here? Well, as we said, to help us, we see the connection between what Mark has written about Jesus' imminent suffering and death and what immediately follows the event of transfiguration.

So, let's see the connection. Jesus is really saying this. There are those there who would see the power of God's kingdom in a way that they'd never seen before.

That's exactly what happens when Peter, James and John, the three closest disciples of Jesus, they see that. They see Jesus transfigured in radiant glory.

And that glory that spoke of the kingdom of God come in power. That spoke of the kingdom of God in all its glory. What do we notice? What does Mark tell us?

[8 : 17] He tells us that Jesus' body's changed. It's, to use the word, transfigured. There's these three disciples. And they're, well, what do they see? They see the glory of Jesus.

And we might say this then, that they're seeing a foretaste of the glory of Jesus on the cross. Of course, there on the cross, the glory of Jesus was seen in the power of His love when He triumphed over sin.

He triumphed over Satan. But we can also say this, surely, that the glory that, you know, we see in Jesus' transfigured body speaks of His resurrection body.

Remember when the disciples, of course, minus Judas Iscariot, when they witnessed the resurrected Jesus, the transformed body of Jesus, that resurrection glory that spoke again of the kingdom of God having come in power, power over the grave itself, power over death.

I think we can also say this, that Christ, Jesus' transfiguration points to the glory of the Lord Jesus when He returns with His angels on that last day.

[9 : 29] The transfiguration of Jesus is all about glory. Glory of Jesus, the glory of the Son of God. Seeing Jesus in all His brilliance, all His glory as God, as the Son of God in power, in majesty, in holiness.

So, this is, yes, this is an astonishing event of Jesus' resurrection. As we said, it's happening at a turning point in Jesus' mission. a connection, the high mountain and His sacrifice on the cross and resurrection.

So, let's try and understand the significance, the importance of all we're seeing here and reminding ourselves again, because we have to keep reminding ourselves of this. We worship God.

We worship God through the Lord Jesus and we give praise and glory to the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to Him. We worship Him. Give thanks to Him for His obedience even in today.

And marvel then, marvel at, you know, at the Lord Jesus, the one of whom John spoke of, John the Apostle spoke of, and he said that we beheld His glory, His glory as of the only begotten Son of God.

[10 : 47] So, we don't just sit here to listen to a sermon about Jesus and for the words of Scripture to have no effect at all in your relationship with the Lord, the Lord Jesus.

No. Worship Him for what we read here. Give praise and glory to Him. Because Mark is leading us to see wonderful things about the life of Jesus. And when we see these wonderful things, bow in your heart.

Bow before the living Lord Jesus. Bow before the one who even now is in the glory of heaven. And as you bow before Him, seek to live for Him, to follow Him, to give His life for you and give His life for me.

But one more thing to say before we start looking at the details here. Who's writing this? Who's writing this? Mark. Mark wasn't there. Mark wasn't there on the mountain top. Peter, James and John were there.

But of course, Mark's source of information was there. We say that Mark's source of information was Peter. Peter was there. And that's why we read 2 Peter chapter 1.

[11 : 56] Because years after this event, years after what Peter saw on that mountain, Peter wrote that he and these others, James and John, were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty.

You know, a number of years after all this has happened, it hasn't diminished Peter's recall of that great day. Peter was an eyewitness. And therefore, if an eyewitness, his word is reliable.

And what we read here in Mark's Gospel, and of course, this is the word of God and it breathed out from God to Mark. And of course, Mark's been given this information, humanly speaking, from Peter.

And therefore, we're assured that what we're reading here tells us of the glory of the Lord Jesus. And tells us too of the promise of glory for all who know the Lord Jesus, for all who are Christ.

It's glory that none of us deserve. But as God's Word tells us of those who are His, that we've been transformed. The same word that's transfigured, by the way, transformed. Into Christ's likeness.

[13:09] As we, by faith and in love, behold the glory of the Saviour. Well, what of the glory of the Saviour? Well, it was our first point, the revealing of the glory of Jesus.

So, Peter was the eyewitness, of course. He's given Mark this information. And, well, what are we told?

We're told, verse 2 tells us, six days after, well, six days after what? Six days after the events in Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus is telling of His suffering, His death, and commanding His people to follow Him.

Six days after, Peter's confessed that Jesus is the Christ. Six days after all this happens, then, the transfiguration. And, you know, whenever we see little phrases like six days, you know, little sort of markers like this, these are not words just to fill the gaps in.

No. I mean, we don't know what happened in these, we're not certainly told what happened during these six days. But Mark has to have a reason for writing that little expression, giving us that time check.

[14:21] And, you know, as we do so often, Scripture interprets Scripture. Why does Mark give us this little, that might seem inconsequential, that I think, in fact, is actually relevant?

If you go to the Old Testament, go to the Book of Exodus, and we're told of Moses going up to another mountain, Moses going to Mount Sinai to receive the law.

And in Exodus 24, 15 to 16, we're told that Moses went up on the mountain, the clouds covered the mountain, the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, the cloud covered it, six days, six days.

And then after the six days, the seventh day, God calls Moses out of the cloud, and Moses is given the law. So Moses waiting six days to receive this revelation from God there on that mountain.

And here's Mark recording six days, and we have to say six days preparation, six days for these three disciples to prepare to receive this revelation on another mountain.

[15:29] So these six days of preparation, I mean, maybe we're reading too much into this, but surely they would have been reflecting on Jesus' words about his suffering. I mean, this is the first time they've heard this from Jesus.

You know, Jesus telling them that he's going to be rejected, been killed, and rise again. So Jesus is, we'd have to say, giving these disciples time to reflect on his words about his coming again in glory.

And then the transfiguration. And then, I think too, we can say this again to link the Old Testament and the New. Jesus' transfiguration is happening on a mountain.

Well, of course, think of the two others who are with Jesus. They are Moses and Elijah. Where did God make that appearance before Moses in revealing the glory of his word in the law?

It was on a mountain. Moses received that law on Mount Sinai. And of course, Moses received a vision of the glory of God there. What about Elijah?

[16:37] It was on Mount Carmel. Remember, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to see who truly was God, who was Lord, and God revealing his glory in that challenge when God rained down fire on the sacrifice.

So, I think there are clues. Six days preparation, then the event on the mountain. So, we're linking the Old Testament and the New. The Old, of course, the anticipation of the Messiah, the New, the fulfillment of that anticipation in the Lord Jesus, in the glory of the Lord Jesus, is made known.

Well, what happened on that mountain? Look at verse, the second part of verse 2 and 3. We're told that Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

Jesus is transfigured. He's transformed. He's changed. His appearance changed. Matthew and Luke give us accounts as well of the same event.

They tell us that Jesus' face changed. They tell us that His face shone brightly. Mark just tells us that Jesus' clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

[17:56] What's this telling us? Let's just focus even on Mark's account here. The glory of Christ is shining through, through, from Jesus, through His clothes.

We might say this, that Jesus is revealing the glory of God in Himself. Now, when Moses was on Mount Sinai, yes, Moses' face shone, but that shining was a reflected glory.

Moses had been near God and that nearness resulted in His face shining. Of course, when Moses came down the mountain, he had to wear a veil to cover the brightness of His face. But in Jesus' glory shining through, it's not a reflected glory.

Jesus' glory itself. It's the glory of God in human form. And so, Jesus' glory shines through His body, through His clothes, and that glorious whiteness, and of course, white being the symbol of glory.

Again, back to the Old Testament. Daniel, Book of Daniel, Daniel in vision, saw one before the Ancient of Days, this vision of God with clothes as white as wool.

[19:12] So, here's Jesus shining, and as we said other accounts, His face changed. He's showing the brilliance of His majesty as the divine Son of God.

And being that divine Son of God, it's confirmed, it's confirmed by the voice of God the Father. Verse 7, see, this is my beloved Son. Listen to Him. God the Father, and I'm going to come back to this in a moment, but just for this precise moment here.

God the Father affirming, this is the Lord, this is the Savior, this is the One who's divine, this is He who is glorious. We have no ordinary Savior.

We follow no mere man. We listen to no mere teacher, and no mere wise teacher. Jesus has no mere idea.

This is Jesus, the eternal Son of God, Jesus, whose glory on earth, as we said, was veiled in flesh. I was singing the carol. but for a short time, the veil's removed on that mountaintop, and the disciples behold His glory, the glorious of the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Son.

[20:31] This is our glorious Savior. This is the Lord whom we follow. And you know, in the world where Jesus is just reduced to just another good man, another world leader, a world religious leader, well, just look at this, the transfiguration.

Look at the truth of the transfiguration and see Jesus in His unique glory. He alone is the glorious Son of God.

He alone is all worthy of our praise and to follow Him. He alone is the one whose glory points to who He is.

He is the Lord Jesus. He is Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the glorious Son of God in whom alone salvation is found. So let's not even be tempted of any kind of low view of Jesus, any view that reduces Jesus from the height of His greatness.

He is Lord. He is God the Son. He is fully God, fully man. He is the one who left the glory of heaven to come to earth for you, for me, to die for sinners.

[21 : 46] And so, in this service we might say a preparation. Well, as we've spent time in worship, yes, preparing, I pray to receive the Lord's Supper later this day.

Remember whose death you're remembering. The death of the glorious Lord Jesus, the one who was crucified for your sins. We're seeing here the glorious Son of God.

The glory, that glory that was glimpsed on that high mountain, the glory that was seen by eyewitnesses of His majesty. This is the same glorious Lord Jesus who just a short time later would be mocked and spat on and crucified as a common criminal.

This is the one who is the glorious Son of God, the glorious Savior, the one who is willing to be made sin for you. So that you might have everlasting life.

So that you might know the glorious one and know Him now in the sight of eternity and know Him in the glory of heaven itself. Do you see the glorious Son of God?

[22 : 57] Even here we're being given a glimpse of that glory so that we more understand the cost of your salvation, that cost that was paid by none other and the King of glory.

Remember as we've said already or mentioned a number of occasions this is the glorious Lord Jesus of whom Paul would later write did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made Himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross. Who's Paul writing off?

He's writing off the Christ of glory. The one who humbled Himself for you and for me so that we might know that glorious salvation in Him.

so we're seeing here the revealing of the glory of Christ. But secondly and much more short the revealing of the forerunners of Jesus because you know for many when we read there in verse 4 there appeared to them Peter, James, John and Jesus Elijah with Moses and all of us this takes us by you might say it takes us almost by surprise what's happening here?

[24 : 23] Why these particular two? I mean we're told here Jesus has been transfigured Moses and Elijah appear and what are we told? We're told that we're talking with Jesus. Now this is scripture this is God's word so we have no doubt absolutely that this truly was Moses and Elijah who were there wasn't some kind of vision some kind of illusion no it's truly Moses and Elijah now we're not told the kind of form that they appeared in but they certainly were recognisable as Moses and Elijah but what we are told is that there on that mountain the same Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt the same Moses who received the law from God on Mount Sinai the same Elijah who was Israel's great prophet so why then?

Why at this moment with Jesus? Well several things we can say first of all what do they represent? Well of course Moses represented the law that God gave to his people through Moses remember Moses and Mount Sinai as we read Elijah he represented the prophets the prophets who spoke God's word to God's people and of course we know that the Old Testament we can summarise the Old Testament as the law and the prophets so in the Old Testament that foretelling of the coming of the Messiah the one who fulfilled the law the one who would be the great prophet who would give God's word to his people to point his people to him to Jesus to tell them that salvation is finding him alone so I think we can say this there's Moses and Elijah with Jesus there on that mountain pointing to the fact that yes Messiah had come Christ had come the one who was promised in the law and the prophets fulfilled in Jesus so there's that symbolism we might say there on the mountain

I think there's more than just symbolism well there is as we see here in verse 4 this conversation they were talking with Jesus Luke in his account tells us they were talking about Jesus departures he uses the word Exodus what he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem obviously then talking about his suffering and his death so evidently in heaven Moses and Elijah have been given that information about the work of the Lord and now they're talking with Jesus talking about what was to happen about to happen to Jesus to bring about the salvation of the Lord's people so talking about the death of Jesus and what that death would do for his people to bring salvation to his people an exodus a deliverance from the power of sin Satan and death itself and I think that takes us straight on to the last point and one that I really want to focus on with you in preparation for this evening the revealing of the suffering of Jesus where do we find this well look at what

Peter does there's Peter again in all his impetuous behaviour you know he wants to somehow recognise Moses and Elijah and he blurts out to Jesus you know let's put up three shelters one for you one for Moses and one for Elijah why is he saying this maybe he wants to build these three shelters three tents to keep Jesus Peter Jesus Moses and Elijah on that mountain keeping there a little longer hold back the suffering of Jesus Jesus had told him six days before what was about to happen Peter hold this back keep them on the mountain Peter's seen amazing things on that mountain top he's seen the Lord Jesus glorified he's seen Moses and Elijah he's terrified just out of his mind we might say you know what he's seen in all the glorious events he wants to keep it there but he failed to see that this mountain top experience was a brief anticipation of the greater glory to come brief anticipation of the glories of the sufferings of Jesus that must precede the coming of the kingdom and power and it's that point as we said we'll come back to this point it's that point that God the Father intervenes to direct

Peter and his companions to see that Jesus must fulfill the law and the prophets and that Jesus must suffer that's why we go back to verse 7 the cloud appears and it envelops those on that mountain and a voice on the cloud declares this is my beloved son listen to him so God is in that cloud God had made his presence known to his people in the past through the cloud the cloud of his glory and there in that mount top the cloud envelops each one of these people on the mountain and there's the transfigured Christ in all his glory and there's these two old testament men representing the law and the prophets and there's the disciples of Jesus and there's Jesus himself and God speaks they hear the voice of God this is my son this is my beloved son listen to him three years before when Jesus' ministry was about to begin the voice of God the father was heard when Jesus was baptized

[30:06] Mark chapter one you are my beloved son with you I'm well pleased the father indicating his blessing on the son the blessing given on Christ's mission of salvation and now that Jesus is about to enter the horrors of sin bearing as he's about to fulfill that mission absolutely as he's about to suffer and bearing the sin of his people God speaks again to confirm that Jesus is his anointed one that Jesus is his son whom he loves and in that love has sent Jesus to fulfill that mission of salvation and where is God doing this he's speaking this he's speaking on that mountain where the glory of Jesus is made known to these three disciples so here's the father indicating that the glorious appearance of the son is a foretaste of that glory that's going to be revealed fully in the yes and there is in Jesus when he appears in that glorious resurrected body and there's that voice of God the father giving assurance that that glory is going to be possible only possible through

Christ's suffering the son is loved the son has approval of the father and so it's the responsibility of his followers his disciples of you and me to listen to listen to Jesus to listen to him you know Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus as we said they would in speaking of his suffering they listened to Jesus as Jesus spoke to them about what was about to happen to him what was to happen for the sake of those for whom he came to die they listened to Jesus and it's for you and for me to listen to the glorified Jesus as he speaks to you through his word of his suffering his death and the cross for you so we listen to him these words that Jesus gave were directed of course initially to Peter James and John but surely the words are for all who follow the Lord

Jesus they're directed to you and to me so don't listen to your own wisdom see Peter had been you know using his own false wisdom when he was wanting to you know put these three shelters on the mountain top there no listen to Jesus listen to what Jesus says about himself listen to what he says about the way of salvation listen to what he says about the way of the cross listen to what he said to Peter about denying self and taking up one's cross and following him so listen to the Lord of glory listen as you hear his voice speak to you through his word listen and keep listening because this is the pure word of Jesus is that word that challenges your faith it's a word that commands you to repent of your sins it's a word as we said that commands you to take up your cross daily and follow Jesus so listen and listen to him only you see there on that mountain top when Moses and Elijah disappeared we're told verse 8 they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only in a few hours time we'll be back here this evening the Lord's people will be gathered at the

Lord's table we'll be remembering the Lord's death by faith you will see the Lord Jesus you'll see by faith and see him only by faith see the one who suffered for you by faith you'll see no one else but Jesus only remember by faith you'll see him who was pierced for you you'll see him who was crushed for your salvation and you'll see the love that gave itself for you you'll see the one who knew no sin but was made sin for his people so listen to him see him see no one else but Jesus only as you remember his death till he comes what was anyone here this morning who won't see Jesus who won't listen to him well who are you seeing who are you listening to if it's not Jesus if it's not Jesus well whoever it is or whatever it is that you're listening to or seeing that won't lead you to salvation that voice will give you no true lasting eternal satisfaction it's only

Jesus the one who died for you it's only the glorified son of God who gave his life for you you must listen to and obey and follow so listen to him and see no one else but Jesus and follow him amen let us pray lord forbid that we see any other saviour other than the lord jesus help us lord to fix our eyes on jesus to see him who was crucified for us who gave himself for us to see the glorious son of god to see the one who is all glorious to see the one who loves us even with that eternal love lord help us we pray in our seeing jesus may it not be a diminished sight may we see clearly all that the lord jesus has done for us by his grace by his love continue with us lord as we continue in worship before you now we pray these things in jesus name amen well let's close in psalm 24 on page 28 and we'll sing from verse 7 to verse 10 this tune of saint george's edinburgh of course the psalm again asking us commanding us to look to the king of glory the lord jesus you ancient gates lift up your heads your doors be opened wide so may the king of glory come forever to abide and so on 7 to 10 psalm 24 to god's praise