

**Mark 9:1-9**  
**February 11, '18**

**“ONLY JESUS”**

**THIS READING FROM MARK IS OUR LECTIONARY READING FOR TODAY.**

**BUT IT’S NOT REALLY.**

**THE ACTUAL READING BEGINS IN VERSE 2 OF CHAPTER 9 BECAUSE THAT’S WHERE THE REAL STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION BEGINS.**

**OR IS IT?**

**WHY WOULD YOU BEGIN THE CHAPTER WITH A VERSE THAT IS A CONTINUATION OF A TEACHING OF JESUS FROM THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER?**

**WHY WOULD YOU LEAVE JUST ONE VERSE HANGING OVER FROM THAT CHAPTER & ATTACH IT TO THE NEXT?**

**IT MAKES NO SENSE.**

**IT MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL....UNLESS THIS VERSE IS REALLY SUPPOSED TO BE CONNECTED WITH THIS NINTH CHAPTER AND THE ACCOUNT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.**

**NOW MARK ISN’T THE ONE WHO PUT THE CHAPTER DIVISIONS HERE.**

**SOMEONE ELSE DID THAT.**

**BUT THEY HAD TO HAVE A REASON.**

**AND MARK HIMSELF HAD TO HAVE A REASON FOR HAVING THE STORY FLOW AS IT DID WITH THIS FIRST VERSE BEING THE TRANSITION TO THE TRANSFIGURATION STORY.**

**WHAT MIGHT THAT REASON HAVE BEEN?**

**LISTEN TO THE FIRST VERSE AGAIN.**

***“AND HE SAID TO THEM, ‘TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, THERE ARE SOME STANDING HERE WHO WILL NOT TASTE DEATH BEFORE THEY SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME WITH POWER.’”***

**AND THEN MARK MOVES AHEAD.**

***“SIX DAYS LATER,” HE SAYS.***

**WHAT’S THE POINT, IF ANY, TO CONNECTING THIS PROCLAMATION OF JESUS TO THIS MOUNTAINTOP EVENT?**

**PERHAPS - JUST PERHAPS - AND I COULD BE WRONG, MARK IS SAYING WE DON’T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE RESURRECTION.**

**WE DON’T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE SECOND COMING.**

**WE DON’T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE FULFILLMENT OF EVERYTHING WE READ IN SCRIPTURE.**

**PERHAPS MARK IS TELLING US THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS CLOSER THAN WE’VE UNDERSTOOD IT TO BE.**

**PERHAPS HE’S TELLING US THAT PETER, JAMES & JOHN – WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH JESUS ON THE MOUNTAIN, HAD A GLIMPSE OF THE KINGDOM IN THEIR OWN LIVES.**

**AND PERHAPS HE’S TELLING US THAT THAT SAME GLIMPSE OF GOD’S KINGDOM IS AVAILABLE TO ALL OF US – HERE & NOW.**

**PERHAPS WE’VE TAKEN THAT BRIGHT & BEAUTIFUL POSSIBILITY THAT LIES WITHIN OUR GRASP & FLUNG IT SO FAR OUT INTO THE DISTANT FUTURE THAT WE FAIL TO REACH OUT & TAKE HOLD OF IT TODAY – THIS VERY MOMENT.**

**WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU READ THIS PASSAGE?**

**DO YOU SEE AN EVENT THAT HAS SPECIAL MEANING FOR JESUS – AN EVENT MEANT TO STRENGTHEN HIM FOR ALL THAT HE WOULD FACE IN JERUSALEM?**

**DO YOU SEE AN EVENT MEANT TO STRENGTHEN THE RESOLVE OF THESE THREE DISCIPLES?**

**DO YOU SEE A MESSAGE HERE ABOUT THE NEED TO COME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN & RETURN TO REAL LIFE – THE NEED TO LISTEN TO JESUS & RETURN TO THE WORK WE’VE BEEN GIVEN TO DO IN THE WORLD?**

**THESE ARE ALL GOOD THINGS TO SEE.**

**THERE ARE SO MANY GOOD PLACES & GOOD VERSES ON WHICH TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION.**

**THERE ARE TWO WORDS, THOUGH, THAT I THINK WE CAN EASILY OVERLOOK THAT ARE PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHERS HERE.**

**AT THE END OF THE VISION THAT PETER, JAMES & JOHN EXPERIENCE – IN VERSE 8 – MARK SAYS, “*SUDDENLY, WHEN THEY LOOK AROUND, THEY SAW NO ONE WITH THEM ANY MORE, BUT ONLY JESUS.*”**

**“*ONLY JESUS.*”**

**PERHAPS THAT’S REALLY WHAT THIS PASSAGE IS ABOUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.**

**BUT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS, I THINK IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO CONSIDER A DIFFERENT WAY THAT YOU MIGHT VIEW THIS PASSAGE.**

**MAYBE WHEN YOU HEAR THIS STORY, IT MAKES YOU WONDER.**

**MAYBE YOU WONDER ABOUT MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCES.**

**MAYBE YOU WONDER WHY SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO HAVE THEM WHILE OTHERS DON’T.**

**MAYBE YOU WONDER HOW YOU, TOO, CAN HAVE SUCH AN EXPERIENCE.**

**MOUNTAINTOPS ARE CLEARLY FOUND IN IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE BIBLE.**

**ABRAHAM IS CALLED TO OFFER HIS SON ON A MOUNTAIN.**

**MOSES SEES A BURNING BUSH ON A MOUNTAIN & THEN HE RECEIVES THE LAW ON A MOUNTAIN.**

**THE TEMPLE IS BUILT ON A MOUNTAIN.**

**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS PREACHED...ON A MOUNTAIN.**

**GOD'S SON OFFERS HIS LIFE ON THE MOUNTAIN CALLED CALVARY.**

**AND HERE WE HAVE THE STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION THAT TAKES PLACE – ON A MOUNTAIN.**

**YES, MOUNTAINS FIGURE HEAVILY IN IMPORTANT BIBLE EVENTS.**

**THERE ARE LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF GREAT PAINTINGS THAT DEPICT THIS TRANSFIGURATION EVENT.**

**THERE'S THE CLASSIC BY RAPHAEL THAT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY WHEN YOU GAZE AT IT.**

**IT COMBINES THIS EVENT WITH THE HEALING OF A DEMON POSSESSED BOY THAT FOLLOWS THE TRANSFIGURATION IN MARK.**

**THERE ARE COUNTLESS OTHERS – ALL SHOWING JESUS, THE DISCIPLES, MOSES & ELIJAH ON THE MOUNTAIN.**

**BUT THERE'S ONE THAT'S JUST A BIT DIFFERENT.**

**IT'S BY TIEPOLO – AN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ITALIAN ARTIST.**

**HE'S TAKEN A DIFFERENT APPROACH.**

**HE SHOWS, NOT THE TRANSFIGURATION EVENT ITSELF, BUT RATHER JESUS & THE DISCIPLES ASCENDING THE MOUNTAIN.**

**YOU SEE JESUS ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE PICTURE WITH A MASSIVE MOUNTAIN IN FRONT OF HIM.**

**IN A LINE NEXT TO ONE ANOTHER, ALL WITH THEIR BACKS TO US, ARE PETER, JAMES & JOHN.**

**TIEPOLO CALLS HIS PAINTING – NOT THE TRANSFIGURATION, BUT – “CHRIST CLIMBING MOUNT TABOR WITH PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN.”**

**MAYBE THAT’S WHAT WE SHOULD SEE WHEN WE THINK OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.**

**SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN TO HAVE A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE.**

**SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN TO KNOW IN YOUR HEART & YOUR MIND & IN THE VERY NERVE ENDINGS OF YOUR HANDS & FEET THAT GOD IS DOING SOMETHING – RIGHT NOW – RIGHT HERE – IN YOUR OWN LIFE.**

**IT’S HARD TO SEE THAT SOMETIMES, THOUGH.**

**IT’S HARD TO SEE THAT THE MOUNTAIN STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU IS ANYTHING MORE THAN AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE THAT KEEPS YOU FROM MOVING FORWARD.**

**SOMETIMES, IF YOU GET TOO CLOSE TO THE MOUNTAIN, YOU CAN’T SEE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP.**

**IT’S LIKE THOSE FASCINATING PHOTOMOSAIC PICTURES.**

**THEY WERE THE BRAINCHILD OF A STUDENT AT M.I.T. MORE THAN 25 YEARS AGO.**

**THERE’S ONE OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, COMPOSED OF PICTURES OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES & BACKGROUNDS.**

**THERE’S THE PICTURE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN MADE UP OF THOUSANDS OF CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHS.**

**THERE’S EVEN ONE OF JESUS USING THOUSANDS OF MINIATURE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS.**

**OF COURSE NOW, YOU CAN EVEN DO IT YOURSELF.**

**I'VE GOT AN APP ON MY PHONE THAT ALLOWS ME TO MAKE A PHOTOMOSAIC USING 150 OR MORE OF MY OWN PICTURES.**

**IF I PRINT THAT & LOOK AT IT, IT'S ABSOLUTELY FASCINATING TO SEE.**

**IF YOU STAND CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE ANY OF THE SMALLER PICTURES, YOU CAN'T SEE THE "BIG" PICTURE.**

**YOU HAVE TO STAND BACK TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE LARGER VISION THAT IS CREATED BY ALL THE LITTLE ONES.**

**SOMETIMES, WE FIND OURSELVES STANDING MUCH TOO CLOSE TO THE MOUNTAIN IN FRONT OF US TO SEE THAT THERE'S A WAY UP THAT MOUNTAIN & THERE'S A SUMMIT AT THE TOP.**

**AND THAT'S WHERE YOU HAVE TO BE – AT THE SUMMIT - TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE OTHER SIDE.**

**SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN TO BRING THINGS INTO FOCUS IN YOUR LIFE.**

**SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN TO BE ABLE TO PUT EVERYTHING ELSE ASIDE AND SEE "ONLY JESUS" – JESUS STANDING NEXT TO YOU, READY TO MEET YOUR EVERY NEED.**

**HAVE YOU EVER DRIVEN IN AN AREA WITH POOR RADIO RECEPTION BECAUSE YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAINS ON ALL SIDES?**

**WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING ALONG IN THAT VALLEY, THE STATION YOU'RE LISTENING TO IS FADING OUT, BUT YOU REFUSE TO TURN IT OFF OR TRY TO FIND ANOTHER.**

**AND THEN YOU START UP THE MOUNTAIN – AND AS YOU CLIMB, THE SIGNAL STARTS GETTING EVER SO CLEARER THE HIGHER YOU CLIMB.**

**THE STATIC FADES & THE BALL GAME OR THE NEWS REPORT OR THE MUSIC IS BACK IN TUNE & WHEN YOU REACH THE SUMMIT, IT'S CRYSTAL CLEAR.**

**SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN TO GET ABOVE, AWAY FROM ALL THE STATIC SO THE SIGNALS CAN COME IN CLEARER IN YOUR LIFE.**

**MAYBE THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THREE DISCIPLES WITH JESUS, FOR THE SIGNAL CAME IN LOUD AND CLEAR THAT DAY... THAT VOICE FROM THE CLOUD – *“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON – LISTEN TO HIM.”***

**WHEN THEY WERE FINALLY ABLE TO DO THAT – WHEN THEY PUT EVERYTHING ELSE ASIDE – THEY WERE ABLE TO FOCUS THEIR EYES & THEIR HEART WHERE THEY NEEDED TO BE FOCUSED – ON “ONLY JESUS.”**

**AS WE MOVE INTO THE SEASON OF LENT, IT MAY BE A GOOD TIME TO BE REMINDED TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN.**

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN SO YOU CAN LISTEN BETTER.**

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN SO YOU CAN SEE BETTER.**

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN SO YOU CAN GET AWAY FROM THE CLUTTER & THE STATIC.**

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN SO YOU CAN SEE WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE.**

**CLIMB A MOUNTAIN SO YOU CAN SEE “ONLY JESUS” – JESUS WHO'S THERE TO GUIDE YOU & CHALLENGE YOU & INSPIRE YOU & PROTECT YOU.**

**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A LARGE MOUNTAIN OR EVEN AN AVERAGE SIZE MOUNTAIN.**

**MAYBE IT'S JUST A LITTLE HILL.**

**MAYBE IT WILL BE IN THE MIDST OF A WORSHIP SERVICE WHEN A JOYOUS HYMN WILL LIFT YOU ABOVE THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE WORLD & YOU'LL GET A GLIMPSE OF THE ONE YOU'RE WORSHIPPING.**

**WE GET GLIMPSES OF JESUS ALL THE TIME – IF WE OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE THEM.**

**ON THE MOUNTAIN, PETER, JAMES & JOHN GOT A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE GLORY OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM.**

**LIKE THEM, WE TOO GET GLIMPSES OF THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES.**

**WE GET GLIMPSES OF JESUS IN THE LOVE WE RECEIVE FROM OTHER PEOPLE.**

**WE GET GLIMPSES WHEN WE LOOK BACK OVER OUR LIVES AND REALIZE THAT WHAT WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IN THE PAST MAKES SENSE NOW.**

**WE GET GLIMPSES WHEN WE SEE SOMEONE MAKING A SACRIFICE TO HELP SOMEONE IN NEED.**

**WE GET GLIMPSES OF JESUS WHEN WE COME TO HIS TABLE & RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION.**

**I BELIEVE THIS ACCOUNT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IN MARK OFFERS A GLIMPSE OF JESUS.**

**IT OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO SEE THAT THE BRIGHT & BEAUTIFUL POSSIBILITY OF ETERNAL LIFE IS OURS TO EXPERIENCE THIS VERY DAY.**

**ALL WE HAVE TO DO SO IS OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE IT & CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN BEFORE US TO BEHOLD ITS GLORY. AMEN.**

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