

Unwrapping the World's Greatest Gift

(Mark 9:1-8)

(preached 4/12/15 Pine Grove BC)

Introduction

To introduce the message this morning, I want us all to dream a minute.

I want us to dream that we are all very wealthy parents of a 15 year old boy...

And for his 16th birthday, we have decided to give us a 2015 shiny red corvette as a surprise.

So, we go to the dealership and we pick out the shiniest and reddest corvette on the lot...

Pay for it, get the keys and drive it home to surprise our son.

But on the way home, we want to take it for a spin ourselves...

And we find the muddiest road that we can and we drive it through the biggest mud puddle possible.

And by the time we are finished, mud covers everything so bad that you can't see it is red..

You can even see the windshield...

The tires...

Or even the fact that it is a corvette.

Still, we drive it home, park it in the driveway covered in mud....

And go inside to give our son the keys....

So, we sit him on the couch and give an envelope containing the keys...

And in order to avoid him passing out, we decide to tell him what we have him before we walk outside..

“Son, your mom and I have a present for you outside. For your 16th birthday, we have bought you a brand new red corvette.”

What happens to that boy at the moment, he hears those words?

His mind’s eye is instantly filled with a picture of that car.

Now, let’s step back into reality for a minute...

Remember a few weeks ago when Peter told Jesus...

“You are the Christ. You are the Messiah. You are the King.”

After that confession, all the disciples immediately began to think about what that meant.

Like this 16 old boy, they immediately think of what that means...

And their mind is filed with glorious thoughts...

Kingdom, freedom from the Romans, a prosperous Israel...

And do they have this picture of getting their Messiah...

And then in almost the same breath, Jesus hits them with this truth...

I am Messiah, but I'm going to suffer..

I'm even going to be killed.

And guess what, you are going to get to carry a cross as well.

As my disciples, you are going to suffer with me.

He has just throw water on their fire...

Now, step back into our dream for a minute....

So, you tell your son and then you walk him outside, and there in the driveway sits this mud covered car.

What is his reaction to seeing that mud covered car?

“What is that?”

That is not a red corvette. That is not even a car.

And why would he say that?

Well, the picture of the car that he had in the house doesn't match the picture in the driveway.

And he gets real discouraged.

And I am sure the disciples were real discouraged when they heard that Jesus was not going to be the Messiah that they had imagined...

Or at least he wasn't going to be that kind of Messiah right away..

So, put yourself in Jesus' shoes or those parents shoes for a minute?

What would you do?

Well, if you were that father, you would simply pull out the water hose and rinse that mud covered corvette clean.

You would get all the mud off allowing your child to see what was underneath was actually a corvette...

And if you were Jesus, you would simply grab a few of your disciples take them up a mountain...

And show them the truth of exactly who you were by uncovering your glory that had been covered in human flesh...

And that event of showing them your glory would be visual proof of what the disciples had already believed in faith...

It would be visual proof to cause them to stay the course...

It would be visual proof to eventually lead them to give up their own lives in service to their King.

And we are going to get a front row seat to this incredible event today in Mark 9:1-8...

I have entitled this message...

Unwrapping the World's Greatest Gift

Let's read these verses and then we go back and look at it in a little more detail..

9 And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

² Six days later, Jesus *took with Him Peter and [a] James and John, and *brought them up on a

*high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them;³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.⁴ Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.⁵ Peter *said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three ^[b]tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”⁶ For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.⁷ Then a cloud ^[c]formed, overshadowing them, and a voice ^[d]came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, ^[e]listen to Him!”⁸ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.*

In all honesty, I can't preach every truth contained in these verses in 30 minutes...

As we look at Jesus' transfiguration, I simply can't look under every rock in these verses..

We are going to skip across the mountain tops this morning...

But there are some fascinating truths here that we must see...

The outline for this morning is a simple one...

We are going to see...

I. The Moment (1-4)

II. The Misunderstanding (5-6)

And then finally...

III. The Message (7-8)

The Moment, The Misunderstanding, and the
Message...

Let's begin with THE MOMENT in verses 1-3...

I. The Moment (1-4)

Let us quickly set the stage for what we are about to see..

We have been in Caesarea Philippi for a few weeks now..

Jesus has travelled to the northern most city in Israel in preparation for his journey south to Jerusalem and the cross.

He has been teaching his disciples...

Most of Israel has loved his miracles, but rejected him as Messiah..

The religious community wanted him destroyed.

But the light is starting to go on for the disciples.

They are learning and understanding more and more about Jesus.

In Mark 8:29, Peter made the great confession of Jesus as the Christ...

And though the disciples don't know exactly what that means, they are getting more and more information.

And most of it isn't good news.

First, Jesus tells them that He is going to be rejected, suffer, and die..

Then, he tells them that following him comes with a similar price tag..

And in last week's verses, Jesus lays out the requirements to be his disciple...

Deny yourself...

Pick up a cross...

Lose your life...

Stop seeking the praise of men...

Hard words for anyone to hear, but to hear them right after you realize that Jesus is King would be difficult for anyone...

Jesus is King.

They are his closest friends and followers.

But the king is not going to the throne but to the cross.

And you are getting a place of honor, you are going to suffer as well.

So in verse 1 of chapter 9, Jesus simply gives a preview of what awaits them after the cross...

In 4th grade, I had a good friend who dad was disabled.

This friend had a number of brothers and sisters, and it was obvious that they didn't have much.

So at Christmas, I decided to buy him a really good football...

He was a good football player and we all played every day after lunch.

So, I went and bought a football with my own money.

I only had a soft nerf football myself, and that real leather football was awesome.

But I bought it and took it home and wrapped and prepared to give it to my friend at school...

And you know what I thought about the whole time I was doing this...

The smile on his face when he opened it...

I let the end motivate me to do this.

In some ways, Jesus is giving the disciples a picture of what lies ahead to motivate them to do the right thing.

He is going to preview His coming kingdom by showing them a picture of what the King looks like...

Do you know what will be true about the new heavens and earth?

Rev 22:5...

⁵ *And there will no longer be any night; and they ^[d]will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.*

According to John, there is coming a day when there will be no need for a lamp or the sun....

Because the glory of God will supply all the light for the universe...

And some of the disciples, (Peter, James, and John) are going to get a preview of that kingdom and that King according to verse 1...

So, in verse 2, Jesus takes these men up on a high mountain.

Most suppose this mountain to be Mount Hermon, which would be a mountain in the region around Caesarea Philippi...

Here's a possible map of that area..

To be fair, some consider Mount Tabor to be the mount of Transfiguration..

But you can see from this map that Tabor is way south from Hermon.

However, if you hold to Mount Tabor, that is fine.

Ultimately, we don't know where it was.

But Hermon would be a natural conclusion based upon its location.

Hermon is often called the eyes of the nation because it is part of the Golan mountain range, which serves as Israel's nature border to the north.

Today, Hermon is home to a UN post and also a ski resort in winter...

Regardless of where this transfiguration occurred, it was a glorious event.

Look how Mark describes it..

“Jesus was transfigured before them, and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”

Though that is a perfect description, I wish Mark would offered a little more detail...

But to be fair, how can you possibly explain the glory of God with just a few words.

The word transfigured there is a Greek word from which we get the term metamorphosis, which is a word you learned in 5th grade science....

To describe how a caterpillar forms a cocoon and changes into a butterfly...

Simply put, Jesus removed his cocoon that housed his glory...

He washed off the mud of humanity that obscured his glorious presence below.

Peter, James and John saw the glory of Jesus without the veil of humanity.

This is the Jesus who will reign as king forever and forever.

This is the head of the kingdom that has no end.

This was a kingdom preview like no other.

Oh, and by the way, Moses and Elijah all show up on the mountain and Mark simply says...

“They were talking with Jesus.”

The simplicity of the words here are almost funny..

“Oh, Jesus was in all his glory and him and Moses and Elijah were talking...”

We know from Luke’s account of this event that they were talking about Jesus’s departure...

They were talking about his death on the cross and all that would accomplish in the plan of God...

Luke tells us what they were talking about...

Mark just lets us know that they were talking...

Incredible scene...

This is the transfiguration.

This is the Moment.....

But let’s move to.....

II. The Misunderstanding (5-6)

You have got to love Peter in verse 5...

“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here..”

I love that statement...

It may be the greatest understatement in the history of the world...

Here is Peter, James, and John in the presence of a glorified Jesus with Moses and Elijah.....

And he simply says, “I’m glad I came along with you.”

That is like standing on the coast of South Carolina and looking out over the Atlantic Ocean and saying...

“That is a pretty good size body of water.”

It is like losing a football game 50-0 and the coach saying after the game,...

“We didn’t play too well.”

Peter says in the presence of a glorified Jesus and resurrected OT saints...

“It is good that we are here.”

And though that was a foolish statement, he proceeds to say something more foolish in verse 5...

“Let us make tabernacles for you Jesus, and for Moses and for Elijah..”

And let me be kind to Peter here...

He simply doesn't want to leave this moment...

He is ready for Jesus to bring in the kingdom...

He is ready to build a place of residence for all 3..

You ever been in a situation that you never wished would end?

A vacation, a honeymoon, a good day of having fun with your family or friends...

You simply wish it would go on forever...

This is Peter here...

Though he and the other disciples are terrified, he wants to stay here forever...

With a glorified Jesus and two important OT figures....

We don't have time this morning to get into the significance of Moses and Elijah being here...

We will certainly talk about that next week...

And even though Peter is terrified, he feels safe and sound and has no desire to leave...

But he stills lacks understanding...

If they stay, Jesus would avoid the suffering and rejection and even the death that HE just talked about.

And though Peter may not want that, He is going to realize that Jesus' death is going to be the center of all of human history.

It is going to be the hinge upon which the plan of God rides.

The cross, though it is horrible to consider, cannot be avoided.

The wages of sin must be paid for those who are going to believe in Jesus.

Without the cross, there is no crown for Jesus.

Without the killing, there is no one to inhabit the kingdom.

Without the rejection of Jesus, there is no reign for His people.

And even though Peter thinks “this is the life” on that mountain....

True life for him will only come through the cross.

And then the misunderstanding gives way to the message of what just happened....

III. The Message (7-8)

As quick at the transfiguration occurred, it ends...

But before it ends, a voice comes out of a cloud..

The father speaks over this scene, and he simply gives instruction about what just occurred...

Now, we saw this before at Jesus' baptism...

As Jesus came up out of the water, the father spoke to Jesus, and told him that He was well pleased with Him...

Now, on this mountain, the Father speaks out of a cloud and says to the disciples and to the world...

“Listen to My son.”

And then in verse 8, it is over...

Moses and Elijah are gone...

Now, we will talk more about their presence there next week...

You may be wondering why they were there...

Well, so were the disciples and next week, we will find out more about them...

But for now, the transfiguration has ended.

The white blinding glory of Jesus is gone.

He simply goes back into his shell of humanity.

He re-enters the cocoon that hides his glory.

And the time on the mountain is over...

So, let us end with what do we learn from this
incredible scene on that mountain...

What would the Lord have you learn this
morning...

Conclusion

I want you to look at two passages that I am going to put on the screen up here to give us some application today...

Now, remember that Peter, James and John were there on the mountain with Jesus...

And years later, when God inspired them to write their books in the New Testament...

They could not get the truth of what they saw out of their minds on that day on that mountain...

Listen to John in John 1:14...

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and ^[k]dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of ^[l]the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Then when he wrote his first letter, listen to what he said in 1 John 1:1-4...

¹ What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so

that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

What do those words mean to us today...

Simply this and this is the first application...

#1 - Jesus Is Who HE Claimed to Be

What was the OT standard of verifying something to be true?

You needed the testimony of 2-3 witnesses..

Simply put, the truth about Jesus comes from those who witnessed what happened in his life...

We are not people who blindly follow Jesus.

The testimony contained in the Bible is from men who witnessed these things.

That is an important application in these days when the Bible is under attack.

IT is important to remember that we do have faith, but it is not blind faith.

Our hope is based upon true historical events witnessed by men who testify to what they saw and heard and touched.

For the second application of this to our lives...

Listen to what Peter says about this transfiguration when he wrote about it years later in 2 Peter 1...

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an ^[h]utterance as this was ^[i]made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”—¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this ^[i]utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ ^[k]So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

What does this mean?

First, Peter was an eyewitness..

But second, he remembered what the Father said from the cloud that day....

His instruction was to listen to the Son...

Listen to Him...

And in verse 19, Peter points us in the direction of Scripture...

He says pay attention to the prophetic word.....

And what is he saying there?

He is simply saying listen to Jesus by paying attention to His word...

And where do we find Jesus' word and instruction?

How do we listen to him today?

Well, we pick up the Bible and go to reading.

Peter is telling us to pay attention to the word of God.

The second application for all of us today is one that you learned in Sunday school...

#2 – Listen to Jesus by reading the Bible.

In the immediate scene, God is telling the disciples to listen to Jesus.

Even though he may be saying things that seem the opposite of what they want to happen.

Even though he is telling them of his suffering and death..

Even though he is telling them that they will suffer as well...

Even though it may not be going according to their plans of what they would like.

LISTEN TO MY SON.

I am pleased with Him. He is the truth...

Listen to Him.

And how much more do we need that instruction today?

The world may not be going as we planned.

The things we may like to see may never happen.

Our plans may be crushed...

Even so, listen to Jesus and his instructions in the Bible.

He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Pick up your Bible and know that you will find truth there.

Read your Bible and know that you are filling your mind with the words of God.

Study the Scriptures and know that it isn't a book of the past...

It is a book of the past, the present and the future...

Look, this simplifies your life.

Dig in to the Scriptures and you'll never need to dig into another book.

Listen to the Son by reading His word.

Amen.

Let us pray.