

“It is Good for Us To Be Here”
Dr. Stephen Borger

Mark 9:2-13

Out of the Gospel reading there is a sentence that every time I read it I smile. In the midst of this GLORIOUS moment...Peter says in verse 5; “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here!” Each time I think – *REALLY...YA SUPPOSE?* Here they are just Peter, James and John and suddenly Jesus is transformed into a heavenly image or vision, certainly something they had never seen before and standing with Jesus is Moses and Elijah. The truth is I’m not sure any of us could have come up with anything better to say. But Peter does not stop there....he usually doesn’t. He goes on with; ***“Let’s make three shelters as memorials – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”***. And what I love is the editorial that Mark gives; ***“He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say”***. I can relate. And what I really love to piece together with this is that most biblical scholars believe a great portion of the historical accounts of Mark’s gospel came directly from Mark traveling with Peter and hearing him preach. So perhaps that means that Mark got this story from hearing Peter tell it which means that Peter told the story on himself. He truly wanted to describe to those who were not there the splendor and majesty of that moment but had to admit he was so awestruck that he did not know what to say. I’m guessing that the part most embarrassing to Peter (although I’m not sure he was ever really embarrassed) was the second line; “let’s build three tabernacles (memorials)”; and not so much the exclamation, “it’s wonderful for us to be here”. It really was wonderful for them to be

there...it just probably was not necessary for him to say it. I will admit that I'm a little hesitant in highlighting this since I'm not done talking yet and have a little more to say. Perhaps it would have been most appropriate today in light of this to read the Gospel account, join together in the Eucharist at the Lord's Table and just enjoy the presence of the Lord. The thing is...I'm not sure we all really understand this any better than the three disciples and I probably have more of the Peter syndrome that I would like to admit...I think I have more I want to say....

So, back to the biblical narrative; it really was wonderful for them to be there. Up through chapter 8 Mark is presenting the truth of the gospel through telling one after another after another of the stories and events of Jesus' life. The disciples have been there, they have heard, they have seen but they have not truly understood. In chapter 8 Mark records Jesus' call to discipleship. What it means to be a true follower of Jesus. He calls the disciples to "Commit to God's Care", to "Confess Jesus as the Christ", and to "Conform to the Cross". It seems they are starting to understand the first two... a little. But they do not have a clue yet what it means to conform to the cross. After this intense confrontation from Jesus to his disciples, he takes three of them; Peter, James and John to let them "inductively" discover the certainty and faith that will be needed to carry them through. It really was wonderful for them to be there.

Fred Craddock, in his commentary, suggests that this is such an extraordinary passage that we must not trivialize it or bring it down to

just a common application. Many sermons have been preached about the “Mount of Transfiguration” and the following passages as being indicative of our mountain top experiences in life and then our call to go back down and labor in the valley. As true and biblical as that idea is, this is not the place, Craddock says, to preach it. There is too much majesty here to be reduced to some common application. So, if we must say something about it, and remember I suggested that perhaps the best approach would be to just be in His presence without saying anything. But since I feel I need to say something....What shall I say?

In the context of this marvelous event, there seems to me to be one great theme and truth and that is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Notice that in Chapter 8, just 6 days before the Mount of Transfiguration experience, Jesus has begun to reveal to the disciples the truth of his coming death. In verse 32 and following we see Peter in a response from the flesh trying to divert Jesus attention away from the cross and death. The scripture even gives reference that Jesus accused him of being used by Satan. Peter did not understand....and then Mark records Jesus’ words in 9:1, words of promise, that some of them would not die before they saw the kingdom of God come in power. We come back then to the Gospel reading for today and notice verses 9-10... ***“As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept it to themselves, but they often asked each other what he meant by ‘rising from the dead’.”***

This event will hold them steady and is a confirmation of God's purposes in Christ's death and resurrection.

The glory and majesty of this moment was testimony to the soon coming passion and death on a cross. Here we have testimony of Moses (the law-giver) and Elijah (representing the prophets), and once again as at Jesus' baptism, the testimony of the Father. So for the disciples and for us who have been tempted to look to something or someone other than Jesus the words come; verse 8 "and they saw only Jesus with them"... Don't look to Moses, the law can not save. Don't look to Elijah, the prophets only spoke of the promised one to come. Keep your eyes on Jesus. **ILLUS.** "*Kodi*" or "*Florence Chadwick*"

Jesus had called the disciples to "Commit to God's Care" and they were starting to understand. They had been with him as he fed the 5,000. They were there as he fed the 4,000. But they got caught discussing the problem of only having one loaf of bread in the boat. Mark says "they just did not understand" but now maybe they were beginning to understand. Jesus had called them to "Confess him as the Christ". This was Peter's shining moment. Peter declared; "you are the Christ". God had revealed that to him he was told. But Jesus also called them to "Conform to the Cross". What would that mean? What does that mean? It is sometimes referred to as the "cruciform life". They would soon begin to understand what that meant. The glory and majesty of his transformed presence gave assurance and hope in the midst of His suffering, death and resurrection. It was wonderful for them to be there.

Jesus has also called us to “Commit to God’s Care, to “Confess Jesus as Lord and Christ”, and to “Conform to the Cross”. And I suggest to you this morning, that as we come together to celebrate the Eucharist and receive the elements of his broken body and shed blood; his death and resurrection give an assurance and hope of His presence.....His majestic, resurrected presence in our midst here as we gather together as the confessing community and in our lives day by day through the Holy Spirit.

II Peter 1:16-19 ¹⁶ *For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”*^[f] ¹⁸ *We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines^[g] in your hearts.*

IT IS WONDERFUL FOR US TO BE HERE!

Mark 9 (NLT)

The Transfiguration

² Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed,³ and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them.⁴ Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus.⁵ Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials^[a]—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."⁶ He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified.

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him."⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them.⁹ As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man^[b] had risen from the dead.¹⁰ So they kept it to themselves, but they often asked each other what he meant by "rising from the dead."¹¹ Then they asked him, "Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes?^[c]"¹² Jesus responded, "Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. Yet why do the Scriptures say that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be treated with utter contempt?¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they chose to abuse him, just as the Scriptures predicted."