

Up the Mountain
Mark 9:1-8

I wonder, if you are a movie goer, you're a movie critic of some sort, you enjoy going to the theaters watching movies or, even if you don't, you've attended from time to time, if rarely. What is it that causes you to go see a movie? What reasons do you actually have that kind of gets you to that point where you go, okay, it's worth it? I'll go spend the money, and I'll go buy the popcorn. I'll go sit in the theater and watch this movie. I mean, it could be a number of things. Right? It could be a simple review you read online. You kind of read and hear of this movie that's coming, and somehow, you're already drawn in because you like the premise - you like the plot - you like the idea behind it. Maybe you just hear recommendations from your friends, people you trust, family members, and people that know what they're talking about, and they recommend it to you, and you go, okay, they said it was good so it probably is. So, alright, this is worth it. We can go check it out. Or, maybe you're one of the many who are duped or kind of brought in by this art that Hollywood has crafted and perfected of the preview, the movie trailer. Right? They've gotten so well refined in their ability to condense into this 1 to 3-minute little trailer that just completely hooks you. And you don't know anything about the actors in it - you don't know anything about even the plot line so to speak, but the preview is enough to kind of get you in on the edge of your seat to watch this movie. I mean, think about it. They can take the movies that are just, you know, absolutely horrendous and dry and make them look like they're an outrageous comedy. Right? They can take these movies that are boring and just full of drama and make it look like an action-packed, violence movie almost, like, what in the world? How did they do that? They take this preview - they take this snapshot - they take a glimpse, and they're able to put it before you in such a way that excites you, and you know this movie's coming, but now you have just increased in your desire to see it.

In a similar way, I really think Hollywood stole that idea from Jesus, actually, because I think that's kind of what we have happening here in our text this morning. I think what we have here is a preview. We have a glimpse, a glimpse of something that all the people of Jesus' time (all the Jewish people that studied the Scriptures), they knew the Old Testament well, and they looked forward to this amazing culmination of the kingdom,

this idea of a time when there would be God's Son on this earth as King ruling over the nations, peace, justice, mercy for all (alright?), a wonderful time that they knew about from the prophets. And what Jesus does this morning is He gives a preview. He gives just a glimpse into that, just a snapshot of that, and that's what we find in this passage regarded normally and known as the transfiguration. It's what we find, and if you think about it, actually this kind of passage is not necessarily one that rises up in terms of what people think of when they think of Jesus. Normally, when we think of Jesus, we love to connect to the things in His life that we can relate to or things that, oh, we would've loved to experience that, you know, just Him feeding people, just to hear Him teach and talk to people. How did He handle Himself with the scribes and the Pharisees? What would that have been like to be there? Or just to see some of His miracles and maybe experience the healing for ourselves or those that we love. We connect to those things, but the transfiguration, this transformation kind of ethereal event where you kind of have this short description that's a little odd, and you kind of think, huh, yeah, I don't even know what this is like. This is hard to wrap my mind around.

But it's actually a critical moment. It's significant not just because of the glory that's seen in the text like this, but because of where we find it in the book of Mark. There's some strategy here. There's a critical importance of where it's placed in light of everything that's happened in Mark's gospel. I mean, if you just think about it, we had probably the high point, thus far in the book, coming back in chapter 8:27-30. You recall how that ended when you finally had a clear plain statement that Jesus is the Messiah? There's no more guess work. There's no more watching Him do miracles and listening to Him teach and then thinking, could this be? Maybe. He might be the Messiah. But when we have that passage where Peter himself says, "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29), and it's true - it's plainly delivered, and it's plainly spoken. And we know at this climatic point in Mark's gospel, yes, the one we've been studying is in fact the Messiah. Make no mistake about it. A wonderful moment for the disciples, for them to feel that there is this purpose and this understanding of what they're doing in following this man, that he is not just a mere man. He is God's own Son. But think about what we've covered since then. Really, after that wonderful, positive, amazing moment of identifying and plainly seeing Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus basically delivered to His disciples a one-two punch.

After this wonderful feeling and knowledge of who we are, devoting our lives to the Messiah, the King, and then Jesus comes at them with these two strong statements that probably take them aback - they catch them off guard. Jesus first says He must suffer and die - not something that they're looking to, not something that they're anticipating. They're thinking, Messiah, King, rule, reign, dominate, put Your enemies to death. And Jesus says it is true; I am the Messiah, but I must suffer, be arrested, and die. So, one thing that sets them back, and the disciples get confused, and then Jesus follows it up with something even more strong. He says and you too; you too must suffer and be willing to die if you actually want to follow Me, a fate which they all eventually felt, going to the death for Christ. And you think about this, and you go, man, what discouragement has come to them after Jesus saying that He must suffer and then telling them they must take up their cross if they want to follow after Him. I mean, think of the doubt, the confusion, all the, maybe, the anxiety and worry of what this would look like, the fear of what's coming. Think about all of this that's assaulting the disciples. They're feeling all this. They've seen so much. They've plainly been now revealed that Jesus is the Messiah, and yet Jesus says He must suffer, and they too must suffer - just confusion. And it's for that reason that this text could not come at a better point. This is a perfect opportunity for this event in the life of Christ to come to His confused and doubting disciples. That's what we find in our text this morning.

Let's read Mark chapter 9:1-8; "And he 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 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. 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." This is our passage here, the passage that is commonly known as the transfiguration of Jesus, the transfiguration, this display of glory that comes in this. After this doubt and confusion that you have the disciples

experiencing, you have this amazing moment of hope and brilliance in the display of Christ and who He is.

What really is our text actually starts in verse 1 and is actually connected to where we left off last time in verses 34-38, and what we see in verse 1 is this prediction, this prediction of power - Jesus predicting this display of glory, this power that will come, that we really see in the rest of the passage. Once again, verse 1 says, “And he 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.’ ” This verse is connected to the previous passage which (we saw already) was a passage of Jesus; “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” ... “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” This was the call that He gave, and it's on this note in verse 38 that He connects it to a more positive note now in verse 1 in chapter 9.

You'll notice in our verse here in our text, He says, “...there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power...” - this reference to “...the kingdom of God...” and glory and power. Well, how did verse 38 end? He said, “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” So, after these warnings, these strict sayings that Jesus gives, these requirements for following Him, He now transitions, speaking of His coming, and He speaks in a more positive tone in verse 1. He gives this promise, is kind of what He delivers “Truly, I say to you...” Jesus will now give this startling prediction for them, for His disciples that are there listening, and what's His promise? “...there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power...” Wow! Think of that statement; “...some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God...”

This is an amazing promise. I mean, some of those disciples will actually witness this. They'll actually see this kingdom, this powerful, glorious

kingdom. So, we have an obvious question before us as we read this verse, and our question is, is Jesus implying that the kingdom would be established, set up, and established, in their lifetime? A lot of different commentators are vexed over this, and they go back and forth, and there's different views for what Jesus is actually referring to. What is this display of the kingdom that He's talking about? What is this display that the disciples will witness, or some of them at least? There's different views. Some people say it's His resurrection and ascension into heaven, and that's the establishment of the kingdom. Some say it's that Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit comes forth and goes upon all those that are there that believe in the message that Peter preaches, the beginning of the church. Some say that it's actually about forty years after Jesus, when you have the Romans coming in and destroying Jerusalem, and it's the coming of the Lord in this destruction and punishment for the people of God.

Well, what can we say? First, we can say this - clearly, clearly Jesus was not promising that the kingdom would come and be established in the lifetime of His disciples. And you think, well, that's a bold statement. How can you say that after reading this? How can we know for certain that Jesus is not referring to the establishment of His kingdom in their lifetime? It seems like that might be what He's exactly saying. Well, think about it. What do we know about the kingdom based upon previous revelation of Scripture, based upon the Old Testament, based upon the fact that Jesus is talking about the kingdom to people that already had the knowledge of what the kingdom was? What were they thinking when Jesus said "kingdom," and what was Jesus thinking when He said that word? Well, He's referring to what the Old Testament describes, a physical, tangible, real kingdom (right?), an actual ruling and reigning King and Messiah over an actual people that would actually encompass the nations of the earth, an actual time of peace and prosperity. That's what the promises of the Old Testament continue to say over and over again. It's a literal, physical time of dominance - God's kingdom ruled by His Messiah. The Messiah would be this King, and so, you think about that. If you just take it for what the disciples were thinking the kingdom meant, and what Jesus then used that word, if He was not implying that, Jesus would kind of have to explain what He means by kingdom, but He doesn't. So, if He's referring to that, then did this ever happen in the lifetime of the disciples? No. That type of physical, actual kingdom was never established in their lifetime. In fact, here we are in 2017

and, nope, still hasn't happened. Alright? We still do not have that type of kingdom, that physical dominance being asserted by God on this earth.

So, people try and think, okay, well, how else can we answer what Jesus is meaning here? Perhaps it's more of a spiritual element (right?), a spiritual dominance of some sort (right?), this idea that maybe with the resurrection and ascension, or the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit coming out on the church, that's the type of kingdom we're talking about, more of that establishing. But notice what we have in our text. Jesus doesn't say a kingdom of spiritual domination or of spiritual nature; He clearly says, "...the kingdom of God after it has come with power..." He uses this term, "...with power..." to qualify it. A term that you look back in the Old Testament and you see it constantly being used with this physical, tangible kingdom. The kingdom that the Jews expected was an actual kingdom of power and dominance, and that's what Jesus says. That's what He's referencing here. He's agreeing with the words of Daniel. He's agreeing with the words of the prophets and talking about a kingdom of power.

And not just that, if you were to flip ahead in Mark (and really any of the gospels) and you kind of go to some of Jesus' teaching at the end of His life, when He's actually talking to His disciples way more openly and saying I'm about to get arrested. The time is near. And He starts telling them about what they can expect in the future. When He preaches about this, when He speaks of the future, He also talks about a kingdom that is still to come and a kingdom that is a glorious and powerful kingdom. He keeps using the same terminology. In fact, Mark 13:26 (if we could cheat) says, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." And in context, there's days of tribulation that are befalling the earth when Jesus does that; "...when the Son of Man [comes] in clouds with great power and glory." So, Jesus affirms what has been written previously about the kingdom and using the same terminology and the same expectation. And in the future, He says it's still to come and He predicts that it's still out there. Just like the prophets talked about in the future, Jesus, too, is saying it's in the future; it's to come.

So, what is Jesus referring to then in verse 1? What is this promise? What is this prediction of power that He's stating? Well, to give us a simple answer, Jesus is implying that some of those disciples there would actually get a glimpse or a preview of this kingdom in its power. Some there would be so

privileged to actually see this, to see a portion, a small window into this kingdom of God with power. And, really, it's kind of simple because our text connects it that way. That's how Mark writes the gospel. He writes this promise of Jesus, and then he connects it to an event right after it, that is, this window, this glimpse, this preview into the kingdom. This event is so significant, it's also in Matthew and Luke, and they do the same exact thing. They talk about this promise of the kingdom and this picture of it, and then they immediately go into Jesus on a mountain being transfigured in His glory. They're connecting it, all of them are. And this is what, actually, most commentators have to agree to because any other conclusion has problems, worse problems. So, this is the glimpse that we see next in our text. This is, really, the preview, the preview of power that then comes in verses 2-4.

So, we saw Jesus, after laying out the requirements for following Him, giving this hopeful promise that there would be a preview, a glimpse into the glorious and powerful kingdom to come. Then we see the preview, that actual glimpse take place. Verse 2; "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." So, notice this. We have "And after six days..." a very specific time reference here. Most of it has been kind of pretty vague and open as Mark has marched through the gospel and displayed and written what happened in this narrative. And here, he's being very specific because he's trying to connect it back to verse 1. He's saying, only a week later. What do you see happening? Just a week later with the inner three Peter, James, and John - these privileged few - not just one of the twelve that got to follow Jesus, but actually one of these three that got to be with Jesus that particular moment. The last time we saw it was in Mark 5 when Jesus got to go to Jairus' house. The synagogue ruler and his daughter - Jairus' daughter had passed away, but Jesus brought Peter, James, and John with Him to witness Him raising her from the dead, this resurrection that took place. And so, in the same way, they are now in this privileged position to go with Jesus up on this mountain. And our text says He "...led them up a high mountain by themselves." - just them - just these privileged few -not the crowd, not the twelve, just these three with Him.

So, we see that they go up a mountain, and our question is where are we? It's six days later. Have they moved a whole lot? Are they in a completely

different part of Israel? Well, we see that, previously, what we were looking at, at the end of chapter 8, was all in Caesarea Philippi which is that town that's pretty much on the northern portion, the northern border of the nation of Israel at that time. So, above Galilee, even further north, that's where Jesus was giving His call to discipleship and following Him, and that's where He made this promise. So, six days later, they go up a high mountain - one possibility is this one, Mt. Hermann which is just a little north. It's a massive mountain in Israel. It would be the largest one, has snow on it all the time, and it was a huge source of fresh water there that would go down and drain into, yep, the Sea of Galilee as you would imagine and the Jordan River. Some people say it could be other mountains in Galilee or other places in Israel, but when we look at our text, if we go down to, like, verse 30 and then verse 33, we see it's not until verse 30 and 33 that Mark actually says they're passing through Galilee again, and that they're actually in Capernaum. So, more than likely, they're still up there. They're still up there, and they're probably at this tall, massive mountain, Mt. Hermann, kind of doing this hike up to the top. This is where they are.

And then this moment, this preview, and how does Mark describe it? "And he was transfigured before them..." That's it. And you think, wow, thank you for the detail - really appreciate that. Alright. Really got a good picture now because that word transfigured, I use that every day in my vocabulary. Right? "And he was transfigured before them..." And you think we would love to have more info on this. We would love to get a filled-out description, and you think about how descriptive the gospel writers were at certain points in Jesus' life in His sermons or in the feeding narratives or other places - and you think, aw, that's all you're going to give us? That's it? Man! What exactly was this like? All we know is this word transfiguration or transfigured is in Greek - it's the word metamorphosis. It's that idea of what we're talking about when something is completely changed (right), a morphine (right?), from one state into another. It's a glorification of Jesus' physical body, the divine crowning of His physical humanity and perfect humanity. In a kind of oversimplified sense, it's Him becoming different and altered is what you could say this word means. So, Mark doesn't tell us much more beyond that, as far as His body's concerned, just that He was transformed in some way.

What Mark does talk about is His clothing. It's kind of interesting. He says, "...and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could

bleach them.” And you think, huh, maybe Mark has like a fetish with laundry or something like that, or maybe that was like his chore growing up. He had to do it, and so he’s, like, you should’ve seen these clothes. I’ve never gotten anything this clean. Right? I mean, he’s just amazed that it could be this bleached. This is what he comments on though, the clothing that Jesus was wearing, so radiant, intensely white. There’s no way it could get more white or bleached than this. This kind of description for how white this was and how shiny it was, it’s used of the reflection of polished metal surfaces or just even simply put at other times just the flashing of lightning. You think of the brightness and the brilliance of it when the lightning strikes and how it just catches us all off guard because we hear the sound later, but we see the strike first, and it just completely shocks your eyes. This was a burst of glorious light just in the clothing that Jesus was wearing.

We get a little bit of help from Luke and Matthew, and they tell us that it’s more than just His clothing. Right? As far as the transfiguration itself, we see it even affects His face. His face was even altered and Matthew says, “... his face shone like the sun...” (Matthew 17:2) Alright. So, you get some very descriptive, now, pictures here as far as this might be a little hard to describe because of just how bright it all is. Right? His face shining like the sun, His clothes like lightning, and you go, okay, this is pretty tricky to even know what you saw when you were basically blinded. Right? Mark trying to get this from Peter; so what happened? I don’t know. I pretty much was blinded. Okay. Give me more. You know, I need some more here. And this is just a brilliant and glorious moment. That’s the point.

There’s more to it that adds to this glory; “And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses...” We get the kind of celebrity appearances from the Old Testament, a wonderful opportunity for kind of a fan-boy moment. Right? Peter, James, and John running up to Elijah and Moses. Please sign my Bible. Right? You know, help me out. I’ve always looked up to you. I love your work. I love your work. Alright. I tell my kids every night about it. But why? Why these? Why Elijah? Why Moses? There’s obvious reasons because of just how they are well-known, but there’s other reasons that people speculate and give. For instance, neither of their bodies were found. With at least Elijah, he was just swept away into heaven. With Moses, he did die on earth, but there was no finding of his body. Jude, in fact, mentions that Satan was fighting over it with Michael the archangel. Moses is kind of representing the beginning of Israel’s history as the lawgiver and how it all

began, and Elijah represents the end, as Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come before the great and awesome Day of the Lord. Some people say they're just two witnesses because that's what the law required, two witnesses to establish an account, and God's like, well, which two witnesses do I want? Ah, Elijah and Moses, they're pretty big. They're a big deal. Why not? Others just say it's simply to show that the Law and prophets are represented here to give testimony to Jesus - Elijah representing the prophets and Moses representing the Law here.

Either way, it continues to kind of be this glorious scene as they're in their glorified bodies and Jesus Himself is radiating in His brilliance in front of them. And Mark gives us the detail here. And they were talking with Jesus, no big deal, just a little conversation between Elijah, Moses and Jesus. Mark doesn't tell us a whole lot about their discussion, their conversation. Alright? We don't really know, but we do get some help from Luke. Luke 9:30-31; "And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." It's this interesting theme that continues here even in the midst of this glorious moment, this brilliant aspect and window into the kingdom of God. With the King in His glory here and even testified by these two witnesses Moses and Elijah, you still have them talking about Jesus' upcoming death, Jesus' mission that He will suffer, that He will die in Jerusalem for the sins of the world. That is still what needs to take place. That is the very thing that Peter cannot get his mind around and tried to rebuke Jesus for it. Right? That's what they're discussing because that is what must take place next.

Well, such a descript scene even though it's not as descriptive as we would like, still to experience all this, it's kind of impossible for Peter to see all this and not say anything. So, he has to speak up, and that's what we find in verses 5-6, the petition, the petition for more power - the petition for more power. Verse 5; "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. You kind of look at this initially, and you think, okay, if Mark was obsessed with clothing, maybe Peter was obsessed with camping, something like that. Right? Well, let's set up these tents. This is great. We're backpacking. We're in the outdoors. We've climbed Mt. Hermann here. This is a wonderful opportunity. Let me get the tents going, get the campfire, pull out our

instruments, sing a little bit, tell some stories, do some s'mores. Right? This opportunity to hang out in this time. And so, most people kind of look at this and they think, Peter, what are you talking about? This is so random. Peter, is this what you want? You just want to hang out and have a good time? Is that what he's looking for? You just said this? Where is this even coming from, Peter?

And sometimes, we don't give him enough credit because I think he does know what he's talking about here. In some sense, the thing that jumps into his head after seeing this glory, after seeing this amazing display in front of them, which is really a preview of the kingdom as Jesus promised, Peter thinks, okay, let's start acting like it's the kingdom. And you think how does tents somehow connect to the kingdom? Well, he's probably referencing this feast that was one of the three major festivals for the Israelites to celebrate, the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Tents. This was one of the feasts they were supposed to celebrate every year, annually, so for a week they would put tents up on their houses, and they would all remember the time when they wandered in the wilderness, when they were wandering for forty years in the wilderness. And where did God dwell? ...in a tent. They would pack up the tent and move, and then they would set up camp, set back up the tent, and then the glory of God would fill that tent, the Tent of Meeting, that only Moses was able to go in and speak with Him. Alright. This was how God dwelled with His people for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness, and then finally when it was time for them to enter the land and receive the Law, they were commanded, remember this. How? Spend a week in tents to remember how God dwelled with you in a tent Himself in the wilderness. This is what's commanded in Leviticus 23.

You might think, okay, so great, so Peter's favorite holiday was camping. Like, okay, is that still a reason to do this? Actually, Peter was probably thinking of Zachariah 14. In Zachariah 14:16-18, we have this promise and prediction of the kingdom, and when the kingdom comes, one of the descriptive elements of it is that "...everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of [Tabernacles]. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not

go up to keep the Feast of [Tabernacles]." And so, Peter's probably thinking of this text, and he's seeing this display in front of him, and he's just shocked and amazed at what he's seeing, and he's thinking, what else is this other than the time? This is it. It is now. This is the kingdom. Lord, let me set up the tents. Let's get this thing going. It's time. It's time for dominance. It's time for You to go and destroy and crush the nations. It's time for You to set up Your kingdom. And so, Peter's responding in what he thinks is an appropriate way through starting this Feast of Tabernacles. This is what Peter was thinking.

Mark gives us a little insight in saying in his own words, "For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified." So, this is just what came out of Peter's mouth in this moment of terror. It's a quick note of explaining Peter's behavior. The reason why it's a little off is because of the very fact of what we already know about Jesus and what He said. Jesus wasn't coming now to set up the kingdom. He just told them. He just told them a week ago that He'd come to suffer and die, and He just told them that the disciples must too suffer and die. And Moses and Elijah were there with Jesus on the mountain, talking about Jesus' upcoming death in Jerusalem, and yet Peter is saying let's set up tents. This is the kingdom. Mark tells us he was terrified and he didn't realize what he was saying because of the very fact that the kingdom is not now. It is to come. Now is the time for suffering. He was caught up in this brilliant and glorious moment.

This moment actually only becomes more glorious in light of what we find in verse 7 and that's the proof of power - the proof of power. In verse 7 we read, "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." So, first we see now not only this display of Christ changing form and the brilliance coming from Him and the testimony of Moses and Elijah, but now we have this cloud that comes in on them, kind of wraps them up and overshadows them. And immediately, we're brought back to references of the Old Testament. We think about Moses who went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the Law and the cloud that came there and the picture and the scene that Moses had when he received the Law for the people. Exodus 19:16 states, "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled." Alright. This more glory and brilliance, as the people, they stayed

away from the mountain, and they said Moses you go and talk to Him. We can't bear this. It's too much for us to hear God. It's too much. We can't handle it. And so, they had this scene of Moses going up on the mountain and him being in this moment of glory to receive the Law for the people.

Now, we have kind of a second Moses here and the glory of Christ on this mountain and God's presence coming and endorsing this. To know that it's for sure God, we see a voice; "And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him.'" God the Father speaking out of this cloud on this glorious mountain, and He speaks in a similar way that He has, actually, at the beginning of Mark's gospel. If you remember how things basically began and how Jesus launches His public ministry, it's Him actually going and listening to John the Baptist and following in obedience and being baptized. And at that moment when He's baptized, God the Father in a booming voice speaking, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) Jesus is the only one who is acceptable in God's sight, and God makes that known at the beginning of His ministry. And here at the midpoint of Mark's gospel, at a very climatic moment here we've identified Jesus as the Messiah, but then we've also put on the table the fact of suffering that is to come, you now have God showing up, still affirming Jesus as His beloved Son and thus the Messiah.

God doesn't just affirm this and say, yep, it's true, He is the Messiah. Right? He also gives a command. He states, "...listen to Him." ... "...listen to Him." More than likely, this is building again off the Old Testament as much of the scene is. But this command very possibly coming from Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses himself when he's giving the Law, when he's actually passing on his speech to the people and he's saying, you know what? I am a prophet, and I have acted in this way for you guys, but after me will come someone greater, a greater prophet; "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—" And here, we now have in a very similar scene close to Sinai this second Moses. This is one that is from the brothers that is greater than Moses and that God is affirming and that God is saying you must listen to this one. This is the one Moses was speaking of. This is the one the whole Old Testament is speaking of. You must listen to him. Why this exhortation? Why this command? Why did the inner three, why did Peter, James, and John need to hear this command? Well, just be reminded of where we found ourselves in Mark's gospel. Just a week ago they heard about the suffering

and death of the Messiah and their own suffering and deaths for His sake. They're confused and they're potentially at a place where they want to reject all this. They want to say no, no, no! This is not going to happen. I don't believe it. I mean, Peter tried to rebuke Jesus, and they think no! No suffering. You're way more powerful than that - that would never happen, no way! We're not going to do this.

But here is God having to speak and essentially having to exhort and rebuke the three and tell them (Peter, James, and John), listen to what He's saying. Don't be tempted to go astray. Don't be tempted to say, nah, it won't happen. We've got the kingdom coming now. God's saying you must listen to Him. Suffering is what is coming for Him and for you. He's right. This is what the disciples needed; and isn't this what we need as well? We need to hear what God had to say, and we have, and the disciples have, but they needed this reminder. Think about it. We've heard, in a practical sense, God say, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19); yet we still plot our own revenge tactics with people, and we rejoice when they have their downfall. We've heard God say, "...for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:20); yet we still erupt in anger towards our loved ones, and we still have this built up bitterness towards people in our lives. We've heard God say, "...do not be anxious about anything..." (Philippians 4:6) ... "...casting all your anxieties on him..." (1 Peter 5:7); yet we allow worry to sweep us away and overcome us and consume our thoughts. We've heard God say, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing..." (Philippians 2:14); yet we participate in our own little, informal, small groups at work and with our families, and we have our own little complaining sessions, and we all gather around and rally around how much we can grumble and complain. We've heard God say, "Rejoice always..." (1 Thessalonians 5:16); yet we gladly concede our joy and allow ourselves to wallow in depression.

It's not acceptable. We must listen. The disciples needed to listen to the Messiah, and God had to tell them to "...listen to Him." We have the word of God, and we need to be reminded to listen to and actually follow the Word of God. It's not enough to be aware of those commands that I just listed off. Oh, yeah, I know, that's in the Bible. We need to go beyond that. We need to actually embrace, accept it, and live by it. The Word of Christ must "...dwell in [us] richly..." (Colossians 3:16) so that it actually changes

and transforms us. We need the same exhortation that the disciples needed, that the three needed, on the mountain.

Our scene that erupted in a kind of quick fashion and manner suddenly dissipates. In verse 8; “And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.” The preview was done, the picture, the window, the glimpse of the kingdom, there for a moment and then gone, swept away. The surreal moment vanished in a moment. They were privileged. They were the ones. As He declared in verse 1 of our text, they were the ones that received this promise that they didn’t die, but they got the chance to taste and see and preview the kingdom of power and glory. Think about what this would do for their situations. When they’re in doubt, confusion, when they’re experiencing anxiety and fear themselves, when they’re going through all these things as they probably were, leading up to this moment, what did this display of glory do? It lifted them out of all that. It reminded them the plan is still good. God knows what He’s doing. He’s not been defeated. Just because the Savior must die doesn’t mean the kingdom is off and will no longer happen. The plan is still on, and you’ve seen the glory of the king on the mountain, and you’ve heard God affirm that. Now they can embrace whatever might come in the future with confidence, with boldness. They don’t need to shrink back in fear. They don’t need to reject it and deny it. They can embrace it now that they’ve seen the glory of Christ the coming King.

Well, how did this event actually impact the disciples later on? We don’t get a whole lot of details in the gospels particularly about this event after it happens. Even in the letters of the New Testament, there’s not much. But what we do have is a little bit from Peter. Peter actually mentions this event in his second letter. We’re aware of 2 Peter 1:16-20, when he states, starting in verse 16, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” Amazing! Peter’s saying can you trust us? Can you trust us apostles as we write to you, as we give you the Word of God? Yes, you can. We were there. We were eyewitnesses of this. We’re reliable, faithful witnesses for you. You can listen to what we say. And he references this event. I saw the glory

of Christ. I'm convinced! Not just hanging on the cross but the glory of the Son of God the King of all kings. absolutely convinced that this will come - that the kingdom will come.

But perhaps what is even more fascinating is what Peter says next in his letter. And you look at the verses that come immediately after this in 2 Peter 1:19-21. He goes on to say, "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This is amazing. Peter references how he was on the mountain, and he saw this glorious scene that we just studied. And you think, wow, talk about a one-up-card in any conversation. Right? Any time he's talking with people, he can say, well, you know, Barnabas, I was on the mountain. I saw the glory. I was there. He could drop that any time he wants, and he does here just to show that he's a reliable and faithful witness. But in verse 19, he says, he is so bold as to say, "And we have the prophetic word [the Scriptures, the Word of God] more fully confirmed..."? What an amazing statement. Was this glorious moment incredible and beyond comparison? You bet. But is that what you need to get by in life? Is that what you need for godliness? Is that what you need to trust God in everything? Peter says no. You don't need visions like I had. You don't need experiences like I had. You have actually something that's better than that experience; you have the Word of God. What an incredible statement!

I mean, a time where so many of us can go through difficulty and trial and tribulation and think, man, if only I just went up to, like, Quartz Hill mountain, and God pealed back the sky for a second and showed me His glory. I'd be like, oh, right, I'll keep going. If I could just have that experience, if I could just see, if God could just talk to me audibly (alright?), if I could just see it. And somehow, we just... sometimes we long for those things, and we act like, now, that would be a thing, and that would change my life. But Peter says been there done that. You have something better, the Word of God. You don't need to see the glory of Christ on the mountain top. You see the glories of Christ in the pages of Scripture. That's what you need, and that's all you need. It's sufficient. It's enough; cling to it, be like the psalmist who yearns for it, sees it as more valuable than anything, any

possession he could have, who desires it day and night, meditating on it, not letting it depart from his lips. This is the Word that we have, and it's even more fully confirmed than what Peter, James, and John experienced on the mountain. God pointed Peter to the Living Word, Jesus, when He was on the mountain. God said, "...listen to Him." - the Word in human form, Jesus. And now, Peter points us to the written Word and says listen to this. You will do well if you pay attention to this. This is all you need; you need nothing more.

So, how can we be encouraged? Because the disciples were experiencing the doubt, the confusion, the fear, the anxiety, perhaps even the anger - and you all are prone to that - we all have this tendency - we all will have these moments. How can we be encouraged? God speak to me in a dream. No! God, thank You for Your Word. It's all I need. It's sufficient. It's enough to make me adequate, fully equipped for every good work. I'm ready. I have all I need for life and godliness here in the promises of Scripture. Believe Peter. He experienced it, and he said so; this is the hope that we have as believers; this is what we can cling to; this is what we must lean on and hold fast to.