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Transfiguration  
Mark 9:2-9  
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Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Pt 1:2)

### **Mark 9:2-9**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Think of all the superheroes from comic books and cartoons. Most of them had their own secret identities. Superman was Clark Kent; Batman was Bruce Wayne; Spiderman was Peter Parker; and so on. Those secret identities allowed the superheroes to, at times, live an ordinary life. They protected themselves and their loved ones from their enemies. As a result, very few people ever actually learned the true identities of those masked men who rushed in to save them.

Jesus isn't like that. He wants you to know exactly who he is. He wants you to understand what he came to do. For that reason, Jesus took three of his disciples up the Mount of Transfiguration so that they – and you through their witness – can know him better. The Transfiguration helps us to understand our Savior better. Understanding Jesus and getting this little glimpse of his glory also gives you something to hold onto in life. So today, as we close out the Epiphany Season, God invites you to once again Join Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration so you can Hold Onto the Glory.

This wasn't the first time Peter, James, and John had the privilege of going alone to be with Jesus. He also took these three alone when he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. But this time, just before setting out on his final journey to Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders had long been planning his death, Jesus took those three away for a special glimpse of just who he really was.

There on the top of the mountain Jesus was transfigured before them. His true glory as the eternal Son of God was made clearly visible. For most of the 33 years Jesus lived in our world he hid that glory. He humbled himself, hiding his divine nature behind his human nature; not making full use of his heavenly power and glory. But on this occasion, for the strengthening and comfort of those disciples, Jesus revealed his glory.

And look at their reaction! They were terrified! Why? Well, that's the only natural reaction of sinful mankind to standing in the presence of God's glory – sheer terror. After the Fall, we see the same reaction from Adam and Eve. After they rebelled against God and fell into sin, when they heard God approaching in the Garden, they hid because they were scared. Moses had the same reaction at the burning bush. When God let Moses know he was coming into the presence of the holy God, Moses trembled with fear. At Mount Sinai, the Israelites witnessed God's glory coming down on the mountain and they were terrified. They were scared that simply the sound of God's voice would be their end.

When we consider our many sins, fear is the only emotion we could feel when confronted with the glory of God. God's glory shows that he is perfect, and we definitely aren't. The Ten Commandments show us how far short of perfect and holy we are. Instead of loving God above all things – with all our hearts, souls, and minds – we love him when it's convenient. Instead of gladly hearing and learning his Word, we grumble and complain about it, we are lazy in hearing it. Instead of loving our neighbors – all

people – as ourselves, we hate others, we covet, we lust, we...the list is endless! In view of all that we have done and left undone, the fear Peter, James, and John felt is understandable. We'd feel the same fear. We deserve God's punishment for what we've done.

But Jesus didn't reveal his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration to terrify. He does it to comfort. In Matthew's account of the Transfiguration we are told, **"When the disciples heard this [God's voice], they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. 'Get up,' he said. 'Don't be afraid'"** (Matthew 17:6,7). Jesus comes in his glory not as the angry, vengeful Judge determined to destroy us. He comes in his glory as the Almighty Savior, determined to rescue us. Jesus shows his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration so that we might know him better. He shows us his glory so that we realize that the one who came to rescue us from sin is the eternal, the almighty God. With him taking up our cause, we can't lose!

After seeing Jesus' glory, Peter said, **"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here."** And it was "good" for them to be there to witness Jesus' glory. It was good for them because it reminded them who Jesus was. But Peter wanted to stay there. He said, **"Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."** He quite literally wanted to hang onto the glory! He didn't want to leave.

You can understand why Peter wouldn't want to leave. After Jesus drove away their fear, why would they ever want to leave?! But they couldn't stay there. It wouldn't do Jesus any good to stay there. More importantly, it wouldn't have done Peter, James, and John – and you, for that matter – any good if Jesus had stayed there. He had to leave the Mount of Transfiguration so he could go to the cross to die. That was the reason he had come!

It was only a short time after this incredible time on the mountain that Jesus made his way to Jerusalem. There his enemies arrested him. There he suffered incredible pain and agony. There his disciples saw Jesus endure the brutal agony of the cross. This glimpse of Jesus' glory was meant to remind those three disciples – and it reminds us – that Jesus was and ever is the eternal Son of God. If they could just remember! If they could just hang onto the glory of what they saw and heard on the mountaintop! Then they wouldn't despair as they saw their Savior hanging on the cross. These disciples needed to hang onto the glory, not there on the mountaintop, but in their hearts and minds so their faith in Jesus wouldn't be shaken when they had to face the dark days that were ahead.

From the time Jesus was arrested until his resurrection, the disciples sat in fear and uncertainty. If only they'd have remembered! We also need to hang onto the glory we see on the Mount of Transfiguration. We face so many problems in our lives. There is so much that can cause sadness, fear, uncertainty. There is so much we can't control. When confronted with pain and sadness our view often strays from Christ. We focus on the problems instead of the one who died for you and now reigns with all glory for you. Think of how much unnecessary pain, sadness, and uncertainty we suffer simply because we take our eyes off of Jesus!

**"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here."** It's good for us to be here today to see Jesus' glory shining on the holy mountain. It is good for us to be here to be reminded once again of whom we come to meet in worship – Jesus, the eternal and almighty Son of God, your Savior! It is good for us to be here because of what is coming.

Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. During Lent Jesus' glory is hidden like at no other time in his life. During Lent we see a lot of suffering and shame, not glory. But the Transfiguration reminds us who we see hanging on the cross. He is not just another criminal executed by the Roman government. He is the eternal Son of God who accomplished death to win your forgiveness.

That's how the King James Version translated the words from Luke's Gospel explaining what Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about. It says, "**they spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem**" (Luke 9:31). That's a weird way to talk, isn't it? They spoke about Jesus *accomplishing* death. We suffer death. One of the consequences of sin in the world, and of our own sin, is that we all die. There is no way to escape it. But Jesus didn't suffer death, he accomplished it. With his death Jesus fulfilled God's great plan of salvation. Following Jesus' transfiguration events moved quickly which brought Jesus to the cross to accomplish death for you. Today, Jesus shows you his glory so that you can view his death with rejoicing. Now, when we make our way through the somber season of Lent, when we come to Good Friday and see Jesus' lifeless body hanging on a cross, we can see his love which brought him to the cross to accomplish death for you, to win your forgiveness, to free you from the curse of death in hell. Jesus wants you to hold onto the glory so you remember who you see die for you-your Savior.

During Lent Jesus' glory might not be so clearly, except through faith. Through faith, faith strengthened by this view of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, we can hang onto the glory. We hang onto Jesus by faith.

And when in your own life God seems to be hiding his glory from you, when you can't seem to see his love, you hang onto the glory of Jesus shining on the Mount of Transfiguration. You hang onto that glory and remember who has promised to be with you always, remember who has already taken away your sin – Jesus, your Savior. He will never leave you and he'll bring you into glory with him in heaven.

Jesus doesn't hide himself from you. He reveals his glory to you to give you strength and confidence as we make our way into Lent and Jesus' glory is hidden. He reveals his glory to give you strength and confidence to last the rest of your lives trusting Jesus, hanging onto the glory.

Amen

Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. (Ps 72:18-19)

Amen