

Mark 9:1-13 (NLT)

The Gospel of Mark The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

Introduction: Mark is written for disciples. It's a road map for discipleship to Jesus. So in a time where there is a lot of confusion about what's going on, who we are and what we are to be doing - Mark's gospel is a road map for the people of God in how to follow the way of Jesus.

Mark is also a book of mystery - Mark's Gospel is so filled with mysterious references to Jesus and his identity. Mark, though rarely quoting the OT, is a master of the Biblical text and has told the story of how God is cryptically and mysteriously present and bringing his kingdom on earth through the suffering, crucified and resurrected messiah, Jesus.

As we've noted, the Blind man and the progressive healing (Mark 8:22-26) is Mark's way of showing us what is going on within the heart of Disciples. The disciples, the religious and state leaders are blind to Jesus' works. But a blind man is taken outside of the village, and through Jesus' healing touch he is now able to see everything! As Jon shared with us two weeks ago, the disciples have an understanding of who Jesus is; they have had front row seats, as it were, to his miraculous works, his teachings and his way of life. They believe, according to Peter, that he is the Messiah. And they are correct, Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed king, here to rescue, to bring salvation and usher in the kingdom of God but he will accomplish this in a way no one expects - "As he says the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead."

Mark in this passage is beginning one of his biggest themes of his Gospel and that is - How Jesus' disciples are to measure power, victory and greatness. For Mark, following Jesus to victory is not through violence and

the assertion of power but by going the way of the cross, enduring suffering patiently... this is the way that leads to victory.

1. The Apocalypse

- a. The passage we are looking at this morning is an Apocalyptic passage. That's a very popular word right now..we hear at all over the place from conservative christians predicting the end of the world, to descriptions of recent natural disasters... But the Biblical idea of Apocalypse and our American/English ideas of it are in fact worlds apart. When we speak of an apocalypse as Americans we mean the end of the world, a cataclysmic event, Blood moons and tsunamis, firestorms, etc. When the Bible speaks of an apocalypse it is speaking of a revelation and unveiling of something that was previously hidden, not the end of the world or even a cataclysmic event.
- b. Here on this mountain top we have an unveiling of what Mark told us at the beginning of the Gospel, but has been veiled to the multitudes, the religious leaders and even the disciples - That this lowly Jewish Rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth is in fact the Messiah, the Son of God. And though Mark has been dropping hints and hyperlinks to this truth all along the way it is here that we see the veil being pulled back and the true glory being revealed.
- c. Mark wants us to understand and see this moment as the theophany of theophanies - A theophany is a visible manifestation of the Divine.
- d. We know this because once again Mark is dropping hyperlinking hints as the story unfolds.
- e. Jesus says in verse 1 that there were some present who would not taste death until they witnessed the kingdom coming in power... and then six days later it says he led Peter James and John up a high Mountain.. directly connecting the transfiguration to Jesus' statement. This is the case in all 4 Gospels.

- f. Not only that but this 6 days later and being led up a mountain is a hyperlink to Exodus 24 where Moses ascends the Mountain of God in the wilderness and sees the Glory of the Lord - A theophany on the mountain.
- g. Interesting to note that Moses actually appears in this scene, and he is also accompanied by Elijah who also had a similar experience - a theophany on the mountain of God. Of course these two men together are representatives of the Law and the Prophets - Moses foretold the coming of a Prophet like him - who would bear the final word to the people of God - if the people did not listen to him, obey his voice they would be cut off from the people of God and the promises of God. Then there is Elijah. It was foretold that Elijah would appear before the great and awesome day of the Lord - the coming of the Kingdom of God... Both these individuals are here giving as it were their endorsement of Jesus... and then as the scene comes to a close they fade out and Jesus is brought front and center - the glory cloud, the voice - my beloved Son - Listen to him!!
- h. Peter, James and John are getting as it were a sneak peak into the future - they are seeing a vision of the vindication and glorification of Jesus. They're seeing the King, with power and authority. Later Peter in his second epistle would describe this moment this way - **“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty (Kingly language). 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 in whom I am well pleased...”** Peter uses Majesty, honor and glory - We should understand this scene on the mountain as a vision into Jesus future installment as the messianic figure of Daniel 7 (Read the passage)
- i. This of course is important for the disciples to see and hear at this moment - most likely being bewildered by this tragic news of the suffering and death of the Messiah at the hands of their leaders... - That news would and did rock their worlds - a

crucified Messiah, was a failed Messiah and a scandal. This teaching of Jesus would cause them to question God's sovereign power, and his goodness, his love and justice - how could God allow his anointed king to suffer such fate, what would happen to the people of God, and the promises of God - how could God allow such evil ????

- j. It in light of all of this that the Apocalyptic vision comes - they need to see that the suffering one is vindicated, exalted and enthroned as the victorious King
- k. We see a similar pattern in the apocalyptic visions of the prophets in the OT and with John the Revelator. In the major Prophetic/Apocalyptic books we have a consistent pattern that occurs in all of them. In each we have the prophet ushered into the heavenly court. He sees the LORD, the Ancient of days, seated on the throne, receiving worship, glory and honor from every part of the creation. Each vision has some aspect of the present world power as a beast of some sort that defies and blasphemes the Lord but is dealt with, and judged by him, put to death, thrown into the sea, or into the pit.. But the point I want to make is that each of these prophetic visions gives the prophet a view behind the veil - they see the world, the course of history as it truly is. Their eyes are opened to the true reality of things, and the vision is one of hope!
 - i. Also, fascinating to note that in John's vision in Revelation we have the paradoxical vision of a slaughtered lamb who is the victorious exalted Lord! The slaughtered lamb is exalted and seated on the throne, bringing his kingdom into this world, ruling in righteousness and justice.
- l. These Apocalyptic visions are given in order that the prophet (or whoever is receiving the vision) might share it with others that they also may have hope. That they would continue to give their allegiance to the Lord and the Lord alone, even through suffering and death, that they would be faithful even unto death... The Vision is to bring shape to their lives - In the same

way that Peter writes to the Church about the Living hope that we have. The vision gives us the hope, the strength we need to endure whatever evils, suffering, or obstacles lie before us...

- i. I think that this passage comes at just the right time/moment for us. There are so many heavy, discouraging things that we are dealing with at this moment - From the Pandemic, to politics, to fires, and even the coming transition at our church. In this moment we need this Apocalyptic vision to give hope to our own lives - The Suffering Messiah, the slain lamb, Our great shepherd, is enthroned as the victorious king over all! He reigns, and his kingdom is coming! Let this vision sustain you, may it give you strength for the road ahead, as we collectively journey the way of the cross that leads to resurrection and vindication

2. Listen to him

- a. Peter has his own ideas of how the kingdom comes. In fact, in one sense Peter is right he is recognizing the significance of the event. It's a vision of the king and the kingdom. It's here! And that's why he blurts out his plan. He wants to set up camp and stay there. Peter's idea is a kingdom without suffering, it's the crown without the cross. And as we've noted before and Jon mentioned a few weeks ago there was no understanding of a suffering messiah in the first century - quite the opposite in fact! The messiah was the conqueror! He was the liberator. He was the son of David, and like Judah Macabee who would violently overthrow the enemies of the people of God, and usher in the Kingdom.
- b. But what the Divine voice from heaven says here is - Listen to him! What has Jesus been saying, what has he been doing?
- c. Jesus' version of the Kingdom of God is very different from his contemporaries, and different from our ideas of power and kingship even to this day - Jesus isn't talking about their violent politics and hostile takeovers; He's plundering the kingdom of darkness and talking about the kingdom of God

being like seed. He isn't keeping up with their beloved traditions; he's purposely going against them. He isn't giving honor and care to the religious system and leaders of the day; He's giving it to the poor, the possessed, the disenfranchised and outcasts, the gentile, the tax collector and the prostitute. Jesus isn't talking about violent death to his enemies but his own violent death at the hand of his enemies... Listen to him is what the voice is saying

- d. This exhortation has bearing upon all of Jesus' words, but has particular relevance to the new instruction Jesus had been giving to his followers concerning the necessity of his sufferings and of their participation in his humiliation.... Suffering, nonviolence and faithfulness to the end, is the way of Jesus
- e. There can be no doubt that Mark intended for the early Church to take this particular word to heart... and to wrestle with this hard truth - that God calls us to victory and glory through suffering, through bearing injustice, wrong, and evil - to respond with love and forgiveness, grace and reconciliation - He calls us to follow Jesus, to the cross and on to victory and glory...
 - i. *Did you know, "The New Testament highlights Jesus's nonviolent response to violence as a pattern to follow more than any other aspect of His ministry." - **Preston Sprinkle, Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence***
- f. We need to give all the more attention to listen to him! A huge mistake of the church in history (especially the western church) is that we have not sat long enough with or thought long enough about our nonviolent master and king. We have not taken Jesus' Kingdom manifesto seriously. We have actually gone along with the world, the way of violence and the way of the dragon.
- g. We need to listen to Jesus - why? *"We live in a culture where all forms of suffering are avoided, or at least medicated. I get a headache, and I pop a pill. I get hungry, and I immediately eat.*

*If I feel cold, I put on one of my many coats. If I get tired, I rest. If I catch a cold, I crawl into bed, call in sick, and pop another pill. And if someone thinks about oppressing me, watch out! ...Our culture gives us no categories to view suffering—especially suffering at the hands of an oppressor—as victory. Our culture sees suffering only as defeat, as evil. It never sees suffering as a means of victory. This is why we need to read John’s vision about what’s really going on from God’s perspective to correct our American, self-serving, “I will defend my rights at all costs” mind-set. We need to follow the slaughtered Lamb wherever He goes, so that I can reign with Him in victory.” -Preston Sprinkle, **Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence***

3. Wrestling with the Tension

- a. As the disciples are coming down the mountain, they have so many thoughts and questions. But Jesus has his own question that he wants his disciples to continue wrestling with in light of what they have just seen - **“And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”** How indeed. That the king of kings, the true and rightful ruler, the hope and healer of the world would suffer many things, be treated with such disdain and hatred and be killed. How can this be?
- b. Followers of Jesus, disciples are being called to wrestle with this tension: that the suffering servant, the slain lamb, is the victor! That Jesus wins the victory, and is enthroned through essentially losing, laying down his life, giving his life as a ransom for the sins of humanity. It calls into question and judgment the way that the world achieves power, success and victory. Followers of Jesus are being called to follow the lamb, and have nothing to do with bloodthirsty, crushing power plays of this world's system..
 - i. *“Weakness as humans measure power and weakness, is the way God is and the way God operates in the world.*

To live in a way that corresponds to this reality may indeed be paradoxical, but above all it is faithful; it is true. To seek power as humans measure it - is not merely a mistake; it is to betray and renounce the gospel. It is important therefore to note that the NT does not understand the gospel as power and weakness but power in weakness” - Michael Gorman, Reading Paul

ii. *“Because followers of Jesus are living out the kingdom of God in a world that is still under sin, death, and the devil it makes it very difficult. Injustice will happen to us. we will be taken advantage of, we will often be despised and rejected. Though we live in this tension of the already and not yet (God’s kingdom has come, but is not fully here) we do so according to the way of the cross, in hope that evil will be resolved by God in the future. Our living cannot violate our nonviolent, self-giving, God obeying love of the cross, which determines the structure and fabric of our existence day by day.” - Michael Gorman, Reading Paul*

iii.

- c. We are being called to listen to Jesus exclusively - he is the teacher, the Rabbi, the final word of God to us. Listen to him and follow him as you live in this tension of what it means to follow Jesus in the way of the cross, and onto resurrection glory. As we see in this incredible Apocalyptic vision, the end is already fixed, the Crucified one is enthroned, he reigns forevermore, the new creation is coming into being...
- d. But as C.S Lewis so wisely said, *“Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning”*. You and I are being called to work out the details, through the contemplation and meditation of Jesus, his life and his words, through the application of the Spirit and our church community - we are being called to work out what this looks like, in our lives, in our homes, in our jobs and our personal relationships..

- e. So, in closing, as we head into this week, as we reflect on what we've read and what we have heard, as we discuss it with our discipleship group - Are we truly listening and obeying the voice of Jesus? Are we being with him, becoming more like him, following him in his overall way of life?
 - i. A good way to know whether or not we are truly listening is if we feel the tension. Do you feel that tension? The tension of suffering and glory; the tension of the already and the not yet.
4. **Prayer:** Holy Spirit, do for us what we cannot do for ourselves...