

Exposed

(Transfiguration Sunday)

February 11, 2018

Mark 9: 2-9

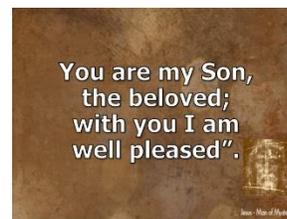
² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.



Over the course of the past five weeks, we have been exploring our "Jesus – Man of Mystery" series. During this series we have discovered that, at times, Jesus is clearly

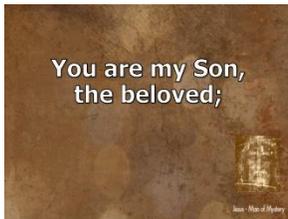
identified as the Messiah or as God's Son. Yet, at other times, Jesus tries hard to remain secretive. At least for me, when I look at my faith journey, I can see moments when it looked like I knew exactly who Jesus was. There have been moments when my life reflected my relationship with God. But if I am honest, there have also been times when it looked as if I did not know God. I would suspect this is true for most people's faith journeys. Let us pray.

As we conclude our series today, we encounter another passage where Jesus is very clearly identified as God's Son, the beloved. Looking back to the first week in this series, we recall that in Mark 1:11, as Jesus emerged from the waters of baptism, a voice from heaven spoke and said, "*You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased*". In these words, God is indicating both His love for Jesus as His Son and His pleasure with who Jesus has become. God is saying to Jesus and announcing to the wider world that Jesus is now ready to begin His public ministry.



Part of this truth spoken at Jesus' baptism applies to us as well. Our walk with Christ begins with our baptism. In and through baptism, we are marked and identified as a beloved child of God and we are incorporated into the community of faith. Does anyone still have a rock like this in your pocket or purse? Back in mid-December, when we remembered our baptism as part of our worship services, we were reminded that through baptism we are made a part of the family of God. In remembering our baptisms, we were again reminded of our beloved place in the family of God and of our commitment to live out our faith. It is also in baptism that we are reminded of God's abundant love for us. Because before we were able to have a faith of our own and even before we were saved, God welcomed us into a faith relationship through the waters of baptism. God welcomed us into the family knowing that we would fall short, knowing that we would stumble. That is love.

Beginning with our baptism, the Holy Spirit begins to work in our lives, ever drawing us closer to a personal relationship with God. At this point in our faith journey, we experience God's prevenient grace at work in our lives. With prevenient grace, we begin to sense God's presence and activity in our lives. As we continue to walk with Jesus, we learn more and more about God's love for us. As our understanding of God's love for us deepens, we reach a point where we profess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. God's justifying grace then begins to work in us, transforming us and making us into a new creation. It is through sanctifying grace that we then begin to respond to Jesus' love by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others. In doing so, we reveal God's abundant love to those we meet. Through our love, others come to know God's love.



In our passage today, the voice of God begins with the same six words that we heard back in Mark 1. But then the voice shifts to give instruction to Peter, James, and John. In today's

passage, God again calls Jesus His Beloved Son. But then He adds, "*Listen to Him!*" It is a clear directive from God himself. God is saying that Jesus has been given all authority and power; therefore, the disciples should pay attention to what



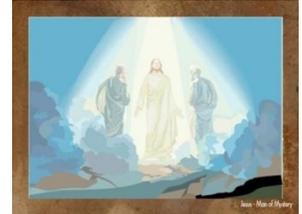
He says and to what He does. So in a way, the mystery has come full circle. We have learned much about Jesus over the past five weeks. We have learned about His amazing understanding of the scriptures, His urgent mission, His authority over the powers of this world, and His power to heal. And today we return to the start of the series, being reminded that the secret to His identity still lies in His status as God's Son. This is a simple truth that we must hold dear.



Our passage today begins with Jesus bringing Peter, James, and John up to the mountaintop. Once there, Jesus is transformed and His holiness is exposed. His clothes become

a blinding, indescribable level of white. Jesus is so bright that Peter, James, and John can hardly look at Him, much less describe what they see. Then Moses and Elijah appear.

Jesus is now in the company of the two most revered prophets of old. As a prophet, Moses regularly visited with



God. It was often on a mountaintop that this interaction took place with God.

Moses also represents the Law. Throughout His ministry, Jesus always spoke of his own mission to fulfill or to live out the Law. Jesus was never about

abolishing the Law. For Jesus, His ministry was developing and understanding the spirit of the Law and not holding to an absolute and rigid adherence to the

Law. Elijah represents the prophets. Seen as the greatest Old Testament

prophet, Elijah represents all the men and women who were God's voice to the people. Throughout the scriptures, the prophets always spoke for God. They

received a word from God and then they brought it to the people of God. Jesus carries on the prophet's role as the voice of God to the people. The presence of

Moses and Elijah, each in their own way, confirm Jesus' authority and identity.



In the transfiguration story, Jesus is surrounded by both the past and the present. In Moses and Elijah, we see Jesus' connection to the past, to the traditions of the faith. It was a

tradition that Jesus both honored and respected. In Peter, James, and John, we see the connection to those who will continue to carry the Christian faith to the

Jews and Gentiles, beginning the spread of the early church. Just as Jesus was surrounded, we too are surrounded by a past and a future. Therefore, we do not ever journey alone. To illustrate the need and the value of having others with us on our journey, a story:

In the fall of the year, Linda, a young woman, was traveling alone up the rutted and rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon Territory. Linda didn't know that you don't travel to Whitehorse alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off to where only four-wheel drives normally venture. The first evening she found a room at base of the mountains and asked for a 5 A.M. wakeup call so she could get an early start. She couldn't understand why the clerk looked surprised at that request, but as she awoke to early-morning fog shrouding the mountain tops, she understood.

Not wanting to look foolish, she got up and went to breakfast. Two truckers invited Linda to join them, and since the place was so small, she felt obliged. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked.

'Whitehorse' was her reply. The trucker's response was, "In that little Civic? No way! The pass is DANGEROUS in weather like this."



"Well, I'm determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, if not very informed, response. "Then I guess we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested. Linda drew back. "There's no way I'm going to let you touch me!"

"Not like THAT!" the truckers chuckled. "We'll put one truck in front of you and one behind you. In that way, we'll get you through the mountains."

All that foggy morning Linda followed the two red dots in front of her and had the reassurance of a big truck behind her as they made their way safely through the mountains. In a similar manner, when we are caught in the fog in our dangerous passages through life, we too need to be "hugged." With fellow Christians who know the way and can lead safely ahead of us, and with others behind, gently encouraging us along, we, too, can pass safely through the trials of life.



Like Linda and the truckers, as believers in Christ we know that we are strengthened and encouraged by one another.

We know that we do not journey alone. And like this story suggests, our journey of faith is better together. Many who have gone before built the church and others have started us on our faith journeys. They now surround us as the great cloud of witness. In the here and now, we are also a part of each other's faith journeys. We carry with us in our prayers and in our hearts our families, our friends, our colleagues, and even the strangers in our midst. Through the witness of our faith, we help one another grow in Christ. We are a community of faith who walk together. Together we are transformed more and more into the body of Christ that God calls us to be. Together we are a beacon of light to others, inviting them to join us on this journey of faith. Much like the tail lights that Linda followed in our story, we too can be the light that helps others along the path to Jesus.

In the lectionary reading for this week from 2nd Corinthians 4, Paul writes of the light of God that we have in our hearts. Paul emphasizes that this is a light that we are called to share with the world. Reading verses three through six:

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,

to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

⁶ For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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Paul himself knows the light of Christ in his life. He first experienced it on the road to Damascus where he came to know the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. When Paul speaks of the gospel being veiled and of God blinding the unbelievers, Paul has firsthand knowledge. Through his own personal encounter with Jesus on that road, Paul came to see the light of the gospel and to know Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Paul's passion then became sharing Jesus with the world so that they too can have what he has – the light of God in their hearts.

To begin, Paul acknowledges that the gods of this world have blinded the eyes of the unbelievers. This remains true today. As he continues, Paul expresses his desire for them to see the light of Christ that is in their hearts. Paul begins with God's familiar words from the Genesis 1 account, "*Let light shine out of darkness*". Paul understands that since we were all created in God's image, we all have the light in our hearts. It is this God-given light, this spark of the divine that we are all born with, this piece of who we are when we are marked as a beloved child of God at our baptism, that can ultimately allow all human beings to see the true light of Jesus Christ within them.



The light of God that Paul has in his heart is the light that he wants all believers to have in their hearts as well. The love of Christ is what Paul wants all people to see as the light that is in their hearts. For them, and now for us, once we start to sense this light and love in our hearts, it is something that draws us in and eventually takes root and grows as we come to know and trust and then have faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As our relationship with Jesus grows and deepens, the light begins to shine out into the darkness of the world around us. It is then that we come full circle in this scripture passage from 2nd Corinthians. As our light shines out into the darkness, we begin to help lift the veils that are over the eyes of the unbelievers, drawing them in and helping them to see the light of God in their own hearts.



We can never fully understand this mysterious Jesus that we follow and the ways that He works in our hearts. But by walking in His ways of love, by shining the light out into the world, and by daily answering His invitation to “come and see”, we grow closer and closer to Christ. Our grateful response is to share Him with the world. At His baptism in the Jordan and on the mountaintop during the transfiguration, God exposed Jesus as His Son, as the Beloved, as the One that we are to listen to. Our call is to share Jesus with others, to show how Jesus is God’s Son, how He is love lived out, how Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. When we do these things, we come full circle as well. Once upon a time, we did not know Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Now we do. We know people that are once where we were – lost, broken. Our mission remains the same as it will be forever: bring the lost to Christ. May it be so for each of us. Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) What growth have you experienced in your relationship with Jesus over the past few weeks? How does this increase your desire to share the light?
- 2) Who do you know that is like Linda, in need of a ‘hug’ but hesitant to receive help from others? Spend some time praying for your opportunity!
- 3) Paul’s passion was to go anywhere and to do anything to serve Jesus. Where do you find your passion to serve Jesus? Your next step is...