

Jesus' Transfiguration, Mark 9:1-9

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One of the advantages of living in New Hampshire is experiencing the mountains such as Crotched, Gunstock, Loon, Sunapee and Cannon. If any of you were to take a ski lift or tram to the summit, then you can look down and see lakes, houses, church steeples and what it does is change our perspective of how we see things, of what is important and what is not.

When the Apostles Peter, James and John had gone to the top of the mountain and saw Jesus transfigured before their very eyes and after that, their lives were never the same after that.

Sometimes it takes a spiritual mountain top or salvation experience where our hearts become transfigured. Then afterwards, it helps us face the valleys of life, motivates us for service, live in the straight and narrow, and be ready for the next life. Mark 9:1-9 says:

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter, said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. This is the Word of God.

Someday, I hope all of you will be able to take a tour to Israel and when you do, one of the places you will visit would be the 1900-foot Mt. Tabor, which is the traditional site of the Transfiguration. I would say that Mt Tabor is close in height to Crochet Mountain, which is in nearby Bennington.

At Crochet Mountain, cars park at the base and skiers can go down one of 25 trails. But at Mt Tabor, tour buses will slowly wind their way around the mountain and once at the top, it is quiet and peaceful and you can see for miles and miles.

In our gospel story, what started out as a mountain top prayer meeting, changed when our Lord's appearance was suddenly transfigured. His face shone like the brightness of the noonday sun. His clothes reflected the brilliance of the white light, which meant Jesus, was in full union with God.

Also present were two celestial visitors, Moses who represented the OT law and Elijah the spokesman for the prophets. Their presence was to validate Jesus' mission on the cross and the resurrection that was to follow. But what is important thing to believers everywhere was that their living presence showed there was life after death.

Though Moses had lived some 1400 years prior and Elijah 900 years, here they were in a resurrected, glorified state.

The cloud that overshadowed the mountain was the Shekinah glory which indicates the direct presence of the Almighty.

The voice which said, "**This is my Son, my beloved, listen him**" provided needed confirmation that Jesus was who he said he was.

So, therefore, if we are to add up the evidence. 1. Jesus' changed appearance. 2. The presence of the two heavenly visitors. 3. The cloud and 4. The voice. We can conclude that Jesus is the Way to the Father and has the words to eternal life. If we were to make a comparison with Jesus with the founders of other world religions, such as Mohammed of the Islam Faith, Siddharta Gautama of the Buddhists, Guru Nanak of the Sikh religion, Ballaullah or the Bab of the Bahai faith, Confucius of Confucianism, Lord Krshna of the Hindus what they all have in common are inspirational words, an ascetic or moral life style, a group of followers, perhaps some interesting exploit such as a particular sign or wonder that they had performed and an elaborate decorated tomb with devotees that still keep watch.

With Jesus, we have the predictions of his life, his extraordinary birth, sinless life. He was known for countless bodily miracles, the raising of 3 people from the dead. He performed miracles of nature, he calmed the storm, walked on water and multiplied the loaves and fishes, made water into wine, cast out demons, spoke

with authority, transfigured before the apostles. Rose from the dead, walked through walls, and ascended on high.

Intellectually we can know these things, but we need eyes of faith or be transfigured from within in order to truly believe.

The promise of eternal life, the future resurrection, a new heavenly home is a living reality. For those who have suffered, suffering will not be remembered in the next life.

The famous painters of the French Impressionist School, Henri Matisse and August Renoir were the best of friends. When Renoir's health began to fail, he was pretty much housebound for the final ten years of his life.

Although Renoir was almost crippled with painful arthritis, he continued to paint and when his friend Matisse came to visit, he would cry out, "August, why do you continue to paint when you are in such agony?" Renoir would never look up and with his eyes fixed on the canvass, he said, "The beauty remains, the pain passes".

That statement reminds me of 1 Corinthians 2:9 which says.

“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard nor have entered into the heart, the wonderful things God has prepared for his children”.

In the transfiguration, we are assured there is more on the other side that awaits us. But to keep that hope fresh, our hearts need to be transfigured with the person of Christ. Just like climbing the top of the mountain, our perspective changes. The fog lifts and we can see clearly.

Last week was the Super Bowl and one of the highlights for many are the commercials, especially the future television shows where the audience is given a glimpse of what is to come. It is the same with the Transfiguration where we are given a glimpse of eternal life.

The Transfiguration motivates me and all of us to walk the straight and narrow. To be used of service. To not worry about world events that we have no control over.

This world is not our final home, so let us live with the glory in view, though it is not time for us to move in, but mentally, spiritually, we can be ready.

In the meantime, make certain of our salvation, pray for family members that do not know the Lord. Do what you can for the Lord and keep your eyes on the transfigured Christ.