



## Glory Revealed

### Mark 9:2-13

Brandon Stern      December 29, 2019

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It is a joy to be with you this morning and I want to extend a special welcome to the children who are here with us on the fifth Sunday of the month. Today we're going to be learning something amazing about what Jesus did on top of a mountain. Jesus was transfigured. That big word means He changed His appearance and showed His glory. It was so amazing and awesome that He started shining, like a bright light. His glory is lighting up the mountaintop and it was something to behold.

This morning we are beginning part two of our study through the Gospel of Mark, calling this new series "Ransom Road." The title comes from what Jesus says about His mission in Mark 10:45: *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* The Baby Boy Whose birth we just celebrated came with a purpose—to die a sacrificial death on behalf of His people. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many. However, as our passage today is going to show, this was not something Jesus' followers were able to get their minds around. For them, Jesus and the coming Kingdom of God had absolutely nothing to do with suffering and death.

I want to invite you to turn to Mark 8. The sermon this morning will focus primarily on Mark 9:2-13, but in order to fully understand and appreciate this passage, we need to back up to Mark 8:27 where the Holy Spirit is providing a turning point for us in the life and ministry of Jesus. Up until this point, Jesus has been doing and saying some pretty amazing things, but now the questions of Who He is and what He has come to do are going to take center stage. It's time for Jesus's disciples—and us as readers and hearers of Mark's Gospel—to come face to face with Who exactly this Jesus is and what it means for those of us who want to follow Him.

Before we begin, let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit's help as we go to His Word.

Holy Spirit, do what You love to do. Show us the glory of Jesus. Holy Spirit, keep our hearts from anything that would distract us from seeing His beauty, His majesty and His glory this morning. Help us fix our eyes on Jesus as He is revealed in Your Word. Do this, we pray, for our good and for the glory of our Savior. Amen.

Let's pick up the story in Mark 8:27. I'll be reading from the CSB this morning. *"Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the road he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?'"* Now, at this point in His ministry, Jesus has been generating a lot of attention. Already in Mark, we have seen that Jesus has been driving out demons. People are coming to Him possessed by demons and with a word, Jesus is casting them out. Jesus has been going around healing people. He hasn't met a disease He hasn't been able to heal.

He's also been forgiving sins. He's been teaching. There was one time when He was out in a boat and a storm was raging. He was woken up, then He spoke, "Be still" and the wind and the waves ceased. Another time He was out walking on the water. He raised a dead girl to life. And on multiple occasions, He miraculously provided food for thousands of people with just a few loaves and some fish. So it's no wonder people were talking about Him. What kind of man does these things?

So look at how the disciples answered Jesus' question in Mark 8:28. They told him that some people say He's *"John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the prophets."* These are all pretty interesting answers, aren't they? All of those men were dead. Back in Mark 6, wicked King Herod and his evil wife Herodias had had John the Baptist beheaded, because they didn't like what he was teaching. Elijah also had been gone for hundreds of years. But for many people of this time, there was the idea going around that the prophet Elijah would come to prepare the way for the Messiah—the Savior figure the Old Testament promised—Who would come to save God's people and establish God's Kingdom. The Jews weren't crazy for believing this. The prophet Malachi talked about this in Malachi 4:4-6:

*Remember the instruction of Moses my servant, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.*

So it makes sense that people were throwing Elijah's name around at this time. "Could this Jesus be the great prophet of old, the one God was going to send?" It didn't take much for the Jewish people to get excited about this. At this time they were under Roman domination and they hated it. As the years went by, their desire and passion for God to send the Messiah to overthrow all of their enemies and establish His Kingdom had only intensified. After all, isn't this what they read about in their Old Testament?

Take Psalm 110:5-6 for example. In this passage we read this about the promised Messiah: *“The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his anger. He will judge the nations, heaping up corpses; he will crush leaders over the entire world.”* This is what the Jews longed to see happen to Rome. They wanted their Messiah, their promised Savior, to come and heap up the corpses of the Roman army. They wanted Rome in all its military might to be crushed and a Jewish kingdom established.

It’s no wonder that Jesus’ ministry is causing quite a stir. “Could this Carpenter from Nazareth Who has been doing all these crazy signs and miracles really be the Prophet of old who is coming to prepare the way for the great and terrible day of the Lord’s wrath on His enemies?”

Now that Jesus has heard what other people think, He puts the disciples on the spot. Look at Mark 8:29: *“But you...who do you say that I am?”* Now there’s no more hiding behind what other people think. It’s easy to talk about what other people think, but now the disciples are forced to answer this question for themselves. In light of all they have seen and heard while following Jesus, who do they think He is?

This question isn’t just for the disciples, is it? This is a question that each and every one of us has to wrestle with. As you continue to listen to God’s Word this morning, I want to challenge you to answer this question for yourself: Who do you say that Jesus is?

Good old Peter—he’s never short on words, is he? He answers for the group. Look at the end of Mark 8:29 where Peter said, “You are the Messiah.” In one sense, Peter gets this completely right. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the one the Old Testament pointed to. He’s the forever King Who will establish God’s Kingdom on the earth. But just because Peter said the right word does not mean he had the correct understanding of that word. One commentator said this: “Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah is correct in name, but not in content.”

This reminds me of one of those classic scenes from the movie “Princess Bride.” Remember after multiple inappropriate uses of the word “inconceivable,” Inigo Montoya finally turns to Vizzini, saying, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” My dad used to love to quote that line to me and my brothers. We would say things like, “Dad, I’m starving.” Then Dad would say, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

That’s what’s happening here. Peter has said the right word: “You’re the Messiah.” But it does not mean what he thinks it means. So in verse 30, Jesus *“strictly warned them to tell no one about him.”* You see, Jesus is not interested in His followers starting a political revolution based on an incomplete understanding of the nature and mission of the Messiah.

Being the good and gracious Teacher He is, Jesus tries to help them understand what it means for Him to be the promised Messiah. Look at verse 31: *“Then he began to teach them that it was necessary...”* Underline that word—it’s key. *“It was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke openly about this.”*

This is so different from what Peter and the other disciples were expecting. We’ve gotten used to the story of Jesus. We know He goes to the cross. But this was unheard of for them. “Suffer? Be rejected? Killed? Rise from the dead? What in the world are you talking about, Jesus?” This didn’t fit the picture they had in their minds of the Messiah. It’s supposed to be the Messiah’s enemies who suffer and die—not the Messiah.

This is just too much for Peter to take. So he decides, “I’ll take one for the team and will straighten Jesus out.” Look at verse 32: *“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”* Picture this. I see Peter putting his arm around Jesus And saying, “Hey, Jesus, can we talk a little bit? Come over here. I like a lot of what you say, Jesus, but this whole talk about the suffering Messiah—that’s got to stop. That’s not how this works. You’ve got it all backwards.”

As Peter’s getting warmed up in his rebuke, all of a sudden he finds out he’s about to be rebuked. Look at verse 33. Jesus turns around, looks at His disciples and rebukes Peter, saying, *“Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.”* So despite Peter’s good intentions, Jesus makes it clear: “You’ve got this all wrong. Even though you said ‘Messiah,’ it’s clear that that word does not mean what you think it means.”

Jesus then continues in verses 34-38 to explain what it will mean for them to follow a suffering Messiah: *“Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.’”* Jesus is saying there is a cost to following Him. Just as it is necessary that Jesus suffer and die, it is necessary for all those who follow Him to suffer and die as well. Jesus is saying, “You’ll have to drive the nails of death into your desire to live for yourself and the praise of others. You’ll have to embrace being mocked and rejected by the world. You will have to give up your right to decide for yourself what you will do with your life, following My agenda for your life instead. Follow Me.”

Notice at first this sounds pretty tough, but it’s actually wonderful news. Although there is a cost to following Christ, there is a far greater cost to not follow Christ. Look at what Jesus says in verse 35: *“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.”* Paradoxically, the way to save your life—your eternal life, your soul—is to live forever with Christ. The way to save your life is to lose it to Jesus Christ. But the way to lose your life for all eternity is to not give it to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is pleading with His followers—and with you and me this morning— to “Do a cost-benefit analysis. Think about this.” Look at what Jesus says in verses 36-38:

*What does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? What can anyone give in exchange for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

Jesus’ point here is not so much about what you lose but about what you gain when you follow Him. He promises that at the end of the road of suffering, there will be glory and life eternal with Him. In the end, it will all be worth it. But today it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer and for His followers to follow in His footsteps.

What about you this morning? Are you prepared to suffer for Christ? As we enter a new year together as a church, it’s important for us to think about Christ’s words to us. You see, our culture is changing so quickly. A decade or two ago Christians were largely viewed by the culture as morally upright and good people. But all that is changing as you know. How are Christians viewed today? Often the culture sees us as hateful, bigoted and even dangerous.

My question this morning is are you prepared to withstand the onslaught of the culture’s pressure? Are you willing to endure the shame and disgrace that may come your way for following Christ and His teaching this coming year? Jesus’ warning is clear in Mark 8:38: *“For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”* Oh, New Covenant Bible Church, let us not be those who are ashamed to stand with our Lord today.

After speaking openly with His disciples about suffering and death, Jesus goes on to say this in Mark 9:1: *“Then he said to them, Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come in power.”* In power? At this point, I’m sure the disciples are pretty confused. Didn’t Jesus just say it was necessary for Him to suffer and die? Then what’s with all this talk about the Kingdom of God coming in power? “Which is it, Jesus? It is suffering and death, or it is power?” Here in Mark 9:2-13, the Holy Spirit gives us the answer:

<sup>2</sup> *After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves to be alone. He was transfigured in front of them,* <sup>3</sup> *and his clothes became dazzling—extremely white as no launderer on earth could whiten them.* <sup>4</sup> *Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.* <sup>5</sup> *Peter said to*

*Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good for us to be here. Let us set up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—<sup>6</sup> because he did not know what to say, since they were terrified.*

*<sup>7</sup> A cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him!”*

*<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

This story is closely connected to what Jesus has just been teaching at the end of Mark 8. Notice the beginning of Mark 9:2: *“After six days...”* At this point the disciples have had about a week to chew on what Jesus had been saying about it being necessary for Him to suffer and die. They have had some time to think about the implications for themselves of following Jesus. What God does here is graciously reveal the glory of the suffering Messiah. He wants the disciples to begin to grasp that Jesus is simultaneously the glorious Son of God and the One Who must suffer and die for the sake of His people.

Notice the gracious revelation of God throughout this passage. At the end of verse two we read, *“He was transfigured in front of them.”* Skip down to verse seven: *“A cloud appeared, overshadowing them.”* Then to top it all off, God speaks out of the cloud to them, saying, *“This is my beloved Son; listen to him!”* Do you see the grace of God here in this passage? This whole event is taking place for the benefit of the disciples.

Jesus didn’t need to be reminded that He was the glorious Son of God. He knew He was. It was the disciples who needed to behold His glory. They needed to see that the same Jesus Who taught them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer and die, was and is and always will be the eternal, magnificent, glorious Son of God. So here on the mountaintop, the mystery of God’s plan of salvation is being revealed.

What Jesus has just said in Mark 8 is now being seen in Mark 9. The exalted Son of God is the Messiah Who will suffer and die for His people. Paul would later describe this mystery like this in Philippians 2:6-8:

*[Jesus], existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.*

This is what we’ve been celebrating this Christmas season, isn’t it? The wonder and mystery of God becoming one of us in order to rescue us from our slavery to sin and death. On that

mountaintop, the disciples beheld the glory of the God-Man. Before their very eyes, Jesus peeled back the curtain of His humanity to allow the glory and majesty of His deity to come bursting forth—fully God, fully Man, in one Person, our Savior Jesus, the Christ.

We must remember that Jesus is not changing into something glorious, as if He was not glorious before. No, even as the Baby in the manger, He was the glorious Son of God, sustaining all things by His powerful word. What Jesus was doing on the mountaintop that day was simply allowing the glory He normally kept hidden behind His humanity to shine through for a moment. I love what Alan Cole writes about this:

We are wrong to call this the “transfiguration,” as though it was unique. The true great transfiguration had already taken place at Bethlehem, when God took human form. On the mount of transfiguration, Jesus was but reassuming His true form.

Let’s just take a moment and picture that together. Can you see Jesus on the mountain, so full of glory and majesty that He was literally shining? The Jesus Who so often seemed so normal, so human, was now exploding with the glory of the infinite God? Can you imagine that? At the sight of this, the disciples were completely undone. The Holy Spirit tells us in Mark 9:6 that they were terrified, which, by the way, is the normal reaction when you meet the glory of God.

And poor Peter. He was so afraid that he just started talking. Do you have any friends like this? When they get nervous, they just start chatting nervously; they just won’t stop. That’s Peter. He didn’t know what to do, so he just started talking about building some shelters for everyone. “Hey, we’ll set one up for You, for you and for you. How’s that sound?”

But can you blame him? What he and James and John were experiencing on that mountain was nothing like they had ever experienced before. There, in the person of Jesus, they were seeing the image of the invisible God, the One Whom God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in. Many years later, John—who was there on the mountain that day—wrote this: *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). This must have been a terrifying, breathtaking, awesome experience for them. This was exactly what the disciples needed to see and this was what God graciously revealed to them.

But that’s not all that happened. Look back at Mark 9:4: *“Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.”* In having Elijah and Moses come and chat with Jesus, God was further graciously revealing to the disciples that Jesus was not only the eternal Son of God, He was also the promised Messiah. God wanted them to put the pieces together. Eduard Schweizer describes it this way:

This story has united two expectations which were alive in Judaism: one, the coming of the prophet of the end time who was like Moses, and two, the appearing of Elijah at the dawning of the end time. It has declared to every Jew that the fulfillment of the history of Israel and of every hope for the glorious end time have already begun with the coming of Jesus.

Moses and Elijah were here on this mountain doing what they had done during their lifetimes: they were serving as witnesses to Jesus. It was all about Jesus. The whole Bible talks about Jesus. Their ministry served to point forward to and to anticipate the coming of Jesus. And now they were appearing here on the mountain to testify to the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the One they spoke about.

This is seen especially in what the Holy Spirit said through Moses back in Deuteronomy 18:15. Let's read this passage together: *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him."* Now, over 1,000 years later, God was again speaking and said of Jesus, "This One is My beloved Son. Listen to Him. Listen to Him when He says it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer and die and be raised again. Listen to Him when He says, 'If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.' Listen to Him when He says, 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it.'"

God was graciously revealing that the suffering Messiah and the glorious Son of God are one and the same Person—Jesus, our Lord. In providing this peek behind the curtain, God was strengthening the disciples' commitment to follow Christ and share with Him in His suffering. You see, Jesus had just said some hard things, so what the disciples needed—and what you and I still need today—was a revelation of the glory of the suffering Messiah.

You see, it is only when we understand Jesus to be both the glorious Son of God and the One Who must suffer and die for our sin that we will be able to follow Him through the valley of suffering to glory. For Jesus and His disciples, suffering comes before glory. The cross precedes the crown. I love Mark 9:8: *"Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus."* Except Jesus! Instead of escaping back into glory with Moses and Elijah, Jesus remained here on the earth. I love what James Edwards says:

In the depths of their bewilderment, Jesus was with the disciples. The One Who calls disciples to follow Him does not abandon them for glory, but turns from glory to accompany them on the way to Jerusalem and the cross.

This is the Ransom Road for which our sermon series is entitled. What a wonderful and faithful Savior we have in Jesus. Nothing is going to distract Him from His mission to give His life as a ransom for many. This is why in Mark 9:9 Jesus is again bringing His disciples' attention back to the topic of His suffering, death and resurrection: *"As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead."*

Just like when Peter had said when Jesus was the Messiah back in Mark 8, Jesus again orders them not to speak about what they had seen until He has risen from the dead. You see, Jesus knew it was only after His death and resurrection that His life and ministry could be properly understood. He wanted to refocus their thoughts on the necessity of His suffering and death. The disciples had just seen Him in His glory, but now He was trying to balance this, saying, "You've got to get this: the glorious Son of God is the suffering Messiah."

Look how the disciples respond in Mark 9:10: *"They kept this word to themselves, questioning what 'rising from the dead' meant."* What the disciples were all hung up about was not the idea of resurrection per se. They believed in a general resurrection at the end of time. What they were still trying to get their minds around was the idea of Jesus rising from the dead. You see, for Jesus to rise from the dead would mean that He would have to die and despite what Jesus had told them a week earlier, they still just didn't have a category for a dead Messiah. So they asked Jesus a very interesting question in verse 11: *"Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"*

Now, despite all the confusion in their minds, they had learned something over the past week: you don't directly rebuke Jesus when He talks about death. Peter still heard that stinging rebuke of "Get behind Me, Satan!" Here the disciples were trying more of a subtle approach to the same question.

What lies behind their question was the idea that if Elijah was the one who came and prepared the way for the Messiah, then why would the Messiah still have to suffer? Wasn't it about time for the great and terrible day of the Lord to come, the day when the Messiah would destroy His enemies and establish God's Kingdom in power? In other words, "Jesus, isn't glory just right around the corner? There's no need to speak of suffering and death and rising again—the glory is right here."

I love this about Jesus. Maybe you've noticed it throughout the Gospels. People will ask Him questions and He answers with a different question, but it's really responding to what they're getting at. He knows what people are thinking. This is what's happening here. Jesus figures out

what His disciples are thinking and brings them back to the necessity of His suffering and death.

Look at what He says in Mark 9:12: “*‘Elijah does come first and restores all things,’*” he replied. “*‘Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be treated with contempt?’*”

Jesus agreed with them about Elijah, but was quick to point out that’s not all the Scriptures have to say about the coming Messiah. The disciples overlooked an important teaching of the Old Testament. Specifically they were missing passages like Isaiah 53, which describes the coming Messiah as Someone Who would be despised and rejected by men, a Man of suffering. He would be Someone Who would be struck down by God and afflicted, Someone Who would be pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities.

So again and again and again Jesus brought His disciples’ attention back to the necessity of His suffering. Notice, “*It is written that the Son of Man must suffer...*” It’s the language of necessity. It’s just like what He was saying back in Mark 8. Just like He did then, He was doing the same thing again here. He was connecting the necessity of His suffering to the suffering of His followers. Look at Mark 9:13, where Jesus said, “*But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did whatever they pleased to him, just as it is written about him.*”

What’s important for us to realize is that Jesus isn’t actually talking about Elijah, but rather John the Baptist. Matthew’s Gospel makes this clear, but Mark intends for us just to pick it up from the context. Jesus was connecting the promised coming of Elijah to the ministry of His forerunner, John the Baptist. As Mark had said earlier in his Gospel, John’s ministry was one of preparation. He was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. However, John’s ministry didn’t end in glory, but with suffering and death. Wicked King Herod had him beheaded, then his head was carted around on a platter for show. Jesus’ point was clear here: “If the world treated My predecessor this way, how do you think it will treat Me and those who follow Me?”

What we see throughout this passage is that Jesus wanted to prepare His followers for His upcoming suffering and death, as well as the suffering they must face if they chose to follow Him. In order to strengthen them in their commitment to Him, He graciously revealed His glory to them. You see, what the disciples needed—and what we still need today—is to behold the glory of Jesus. It’s only as we behold His glory that we’ll be able to persevere through the hardships of following Him in this life, since we will know that in the end it will be worth it. Why? Because He is so glorious, so magnificent, so wonderful—how could it not be?

As we prepare to enter another year together, let’s commit to gaze upon the glory of Christ as He is revealed in His Word. Listen to what Peter wrote many years later in 2 Peter 1:16-19:

*<sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased!" <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> We also have the prophetic word strongly confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

In the Bible, we have the voice of God proclaiming the glory of Christ to us. We also have the Spirit of God giving us eyes to see and behold His glory. Let us take advantage of this incredible, life-giving, faith-sustaining, perseverance-producing privilege this coming year. Let us be people of the Book. Let's open our Bibles and read and pray to the Holy Spirit, "Show me the glory of Christ."

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## New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

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